SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 485. FOR WEEK ENDING APRIL 16TH, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 485.] For the Week ending April 16th, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

The Story of La Guenca.

THE evening train was on the point of leaving Madrid for Seville, and I was congratulating myself on having secured an entire compartment for the night, when the door swung open once more, and a woman bounded in—I can find no other word to describe the almost panther-like agility of her movements—and seated herself opposite to me.

In another instant we were steaming out of the station. The quiet *nonchalance* with which the new arrival leant back against the cushions, the repose of her whole attitude, contrasting as it did with her somewhat energetic mode of entrance a moment since, roused in me a faint sense of curiosity. She was dressed in some clinging, soft material, and a large mantilla, draped low over her forehead, veiled her head, throat, and shoulders.

As my eyes became more accustomed to the dim light afforded by the solitary oil-lamp, I could trace the outline of a slender but exquisitely moulded figure, and catch swift glimpses of a cameo-like profile, of a full and somewhat sensuous scarlet mouth, and handsome, sombre, deep-lashed brows, that gave a look of energy which was yet inexpressively piquant to her face.

The train sped along swiftly and noisily. My companion was gazing steadfastly out into the night. I was gazing furtively at my companion. Suddenly she turned and looked full at me. Such a glance! In the densely dark pupils of her eyes there was a flash as of yellow flame. For a moment they looked almost phosphorescent. Involuntarily I closed my own eyes for an instant. When I reopened them her face was transformed, her long lashes were half drooped, her lips curved in a faint smile. The almost diabolical expression of a moment since was changed into one of half-conscious, feminine coquetry.

The swift metamorphosis startled me. It also aroused in me a decided feeling of interest. Who and what was she? The answer was not easy to find; for in no country in the world is it more difficult to gauge a woman's social status by her outward appearance than in Spain, where the liberty of manners and customs on the one hand and the national dignity and pride of bearing on the other, constantly lead a stranger into most awkward mistakes.

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It was still early in the evening, and sleep was far from me. I resolved to start a conversation.

"Will you permit me to smoke, señorita?"

"*Si, senor, con mucho gusto*" (Yes, señor, with great pleasure,) came the answer, accompanied by a charming smile.

As I was lighting my cigar, she drew from her pocket a dainty silver case, took out a cigarette, and asked me for a light as simply and as naïvely as though it were the most natural thing in the world that she should join me. Leaning forward to hold a match for her, I was astonished at the marvellous perfection of her features. But again I met that strange glance—a tawny gleam like that in the eye of a beast of the forest as it watches its prey.

"What an awfully handsome woman!" I thought, recalling with a shudder the old southern belief in the evil eye. She smoked with half-closed eyes and a dainty appearance of relish.

"We will soon be in Aragues," she said presently, "and then we go to Alcazar de San Juan, where we stop for supper. Do you know this route, señor? No? I have been over it any number of times."

"Aragues!" shouted the guard. "Five minutes' stop!"

We both alighted. I was longing for a breath of the cool night air. As I sauntered back towards my compartment, I saw my *incognita* in a low but eager conversation with a dark, picturesque-looking fellow. From the frequency with which they glanced towards me, it was easy to guess that I was the subject of their conversation. And from the malignant look in the man's eyes I inferred that he was probably a jealous lover.

As he assisted my companion into the carriage, two sentences caught my ear distinctly: "*Sos les bengoros le ligueren*," he growled with a side-look in my direction, and then he added in softer tone: "*Stebe te garabe.*"

It was by the merest chance that I understood him. Some years before I had come across a little book on the dialect of the Spanish gipsies, and as I had become quite interested in it, I still remembered enough to catch the significance of his words. "May the devil take him!" was the amiable wish intended doubtless for myself; and the second, "God guard thee," was his adieu to my companion.

The mystery was partially solved. She evidently belonged to one of the numerous bands of Spanish gipsies; and judging from the deference with which the fellow had spoken to her, and attention of homage shown to her by a little group of swarthy nomads by whom I saw her surrounded in the station at Alcazar, where we stopped at midnight, I judged her to be a person of some rank and importance amongst them.

Being very fond of my creature comforts, I fell asleep on leaving Alcazar, and when I awoke the sun was shining brightly in at the carriage window.

"Have you slept well, señor?" asked my charming *vis-à-vis* amusedly.

"Delightfully, I must confess, although I should blush for having done so in such charming company."

"Leave flattery for Frenchmen and Spaniards," she answered with a touch of pretty disdain.

Seen in the clear light of the day, her beauty was simply dazzling. I was lost in admiration of her exquisite features. But there was a sort of uncanny fascination about her face, and her trick of smiling brilliantly with her lips, while the eyes remained sombre and threatening, gave one cause for reflection.

A beautiful woman and a dangerous one, who would be capable of any cruelty, and treachery, but alluring, subtle. Involuntarily the thought came to my mind: "God help any man who falls in love with her!"

"You seem to be travelling with quite a suite, señorita," I said presently. "I saw you surrounded by friends at Alcazar."

"Ah, yes, those are my people."

"And you are——"

"We are travelling artists returning to Seville. Flamencos, who"—with an enigmatical smile—"earn their living by dancing."

"You seem, also, to tell fortunes, as I perceived yesterday."

She grew very grave.

"It is quite true," she said slowly. "I can read men's past in their eyes, and their future in the lines of their hand."

"Will you not read my fortune?" I asked, laying my left hand, palm upwards, on hers, which was cold as ice.

There was a moment of perfect silence. Then her sombre eyes looked straight into mine.

"You will meet, unexpectedly, a friend in Cordova. If you love him you will do well to warn him not to attend our dances in Seville."

She ceased abruptly.

How had she guessed that it was my intention to stay in Cordova?

"What of myself," I asked. "Will you not tell me something of my future?"

The locomotive gave a shrill whistle. We were gliding into the station.

"Later, señor," she said, "in Seville."

"But how?—when?" I persisted, my curiosity being aroused. "I do not even know your name."

There was a little crowd of her people at the door of the coupé as the train stopped. Her truculent-looking admirer seemed to lead the band. A smile brightened his handsome, evil face as he helped her to alight. As they moved off, she paused, and glancing back over her shoulder with an infinitely graceful movement of her beautiful head, she called to me:

"Do not forget, señor; we will meet again in Seville."

II.

It was fair time at Cordova. The boulevards were lined with long rows of booths, laden with articles of every description. There were circuses, shooting-galleries, strolling players, merry-go-rounds, and even an improvised ball-room.

A little knot of people was gathered on one of the open plazas. Drawing nearer to see what was the attraction, I recognised, to my surprise, the central figure. A tall, handsome blonde young man, with a laughing, boyish face, who was amusing himself by scattering handfuls of small coppers among a crowd of swarthy, half naked children, scrambling, laughing, shouting, tumbling over one another in their eagerness to capture the coins.

I was no less delighted than surprised to see him. He was a young Russian, Ivan Kasanjew by name, who had lived in the same hotel with me for two winters in Paris. He was a bright, genial fellow, something of a dare-devil, a trifle eccentric, like all true Russians, and sufficiently well off to indulge in his passion for the collection of works of art of every description.

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"Ivan!" I called to him, when I had been watching the fun for a few moments. "Ivan Kasanjew!"

His amazement and delight were equal to my own. Questions were asked; explanations of how, whence, and where soon made. He had been making a short trip through Spain; had stopped at Cordova for a day or two, and was going on to-morrow to Seville. On learning that that was also my destination, it was at once decided to travel together, and on the following morning we were en route for the Andalusian capital.

In my pleasure at meeting Ivan, La Guenca and her prophecy had completely faded from my mind.

One evening, as we sat sipping our after-dinner coffee, about a week after our arrival in Seville, Ivan, who usually planned our evening amusements, said to me:

"I've got something new for to-night, Harris—what you Englishmen would call awfully jolly. There is going to be a gipsy entertainment at Calle de Carbon—singing and dancing, I believe. They say the show is immense, and that some of the girls are bewilderingly handsome."

As he spoke, there came to me as a flash, the memory of my adventure in the train; of the dark, sombre face of the gipsy woman, and her prophecy of our meeting in Seville. I am not superstitious naturally, yet an odd feeling of dread came over me.

"Well?" said Ivan impatiently.

I glanced at his handsome, insouciant face. Should I tell him? The fear of being laughed at kept me silent.

"Do you want very much to go to this show," I stammered lamely.

"Why, are you ill. You look decidedly queer."

"No, not ill, but——"

"But me no 'buts,' Harris. Come along man. What is the matter with you?"

An hour later we were seated in a huge hall, amongst an immense audience, chiefly of the lower classes, with a sprinkling of young swells, drawn there, doubtless, by the clever dancing of the women.

Before us was a roughly constructed stage, on which the gipsy troupe, attired in gorgeous and fantastic costumes, were seated in a large semi-circle. The form of the entertainment was unique. One of the men would start a weird twanging on his guitar, and commence a sort of low, nasal chant, which was taken up, one by one, by the troupe, and then by the whole audience, while they all kept time with their feet and by a quick tapping of the palms of their hands. This noise, now rising, now falling was intended to arouse the highest point of nervous tension and excitement both in the audience and the performers. One after another the gipsies would rise and come forward, and go through some symbolic pantomime of love or hate, joy or sorrow, by dancing and gesture, to the accompaniment of the guitar, in whose principal player I recognised the man who had consigned me to the evil one in the station of Aragues. The lithe, almost snake-like movements of the dancers, the wild music, added to, ever and anon, by the banging of the tambourine or the rattle of castanets, seemed to my prosaic mind like an orgie in a madhouse.

Suddenly there was a lull, followed by the wild cries of "La Guenca! La Guenca!"

She glided from behind a heavy curtain and stood smiling before the audience, acknowledging their rapturous acclamations with regal grace.

A fantastic costume of orange and gold set off her form to perfection. Her bare throat and arms were glittering with golden baubels. She poised one arm above her head, rested her right hand lightly on her hip, and commenced to dance. Such dancing! Now soft, sensuous, undulating; now swaying languorously with half closed eyes; now whirling and bounding lightly and swiftly; now half crouching with flashing eyes, and then springing forward again, laughing radiantly. It was diabolical. A sudden grasp of my arm recalled me to myself. Ivan was breathless with excitement. His fair face was flushed with crimson.

"She is wonderful!" he gasped. "She is divine!"

"Say devilish, rather," I muttered.

He did not even hear me. He was watching again, with his whole soul in his eager blue eyes. When the performance was over, I could hardly drag him away.

"I must see her again," he kept repeating. "If I could only meet her, only speak to her!"

His wish was soon granted. As we passed out we saw her about to enter a neighbouring restaurant. She recognised me at once and came towards us.

"Welcome to Seville!" she exclaimed, holding out her brown, slender hand, and then added, a little maliciously, "I see that you have brought your friend."

Kasanjew looked bewildered.

"Why, Harris," he broke forth at last, "why didn't you tell me you knew the señorita?"

There was a world of reproach in his voice.

I did not know whether to laugh or to be angry. The *danseuse* relieved me from my embarrassment.

"Will not the gentleman join us?" she said invitingly.

Ivan accepted eagerly. I could only follow his example. We found the rest of the company already seated.

"If the cabaleros will deign to take supper with us," she said with a charming smile. "This is Pepe," introducing with a graceful gesture the dark-browed guitar player, who scowled at us fiercely. "And that is Juan, and there is Palma, and the *nina* (girl) is our Pepita."

The supper was a joyous one. All, with the exception of Pepe, relaxed under the quantities of wine which Ivan insisted on ordering. My friend was radiantly happy. But it was the smile of La Guenca, not the wine, that mounted to his head. Whether her capricious fancy had been caught by his blonde beauty or whether she was enticing him for some purpose of her own, I could not decide. If I was doubtful of her feelings, Pepe was more easily read. He frowned darkly, ate little, drank nothing, and when Ivan insisted on filling his glass, he struck it as though accidentally with his arm, sending it crashing to the floor; the broken glass seemed ominous.

All the way back to our hotel, Ivan simply rhapsodised on the charms of his new acquaintance. She had told him that her name was Gabriella, and boasted that she had Royal Moorish blood in her veins. He insisted on hearing the story of our meeting in all its details. Unconsciously I grew very earnest as I spoke of the warning which I had received.

"What nonsense, my dear fellow!" he exclaimed, laughing. "The only thing worth consideration in the matter is Pepe. He seems to be an ugly customer. But," he added, drawing a silver mounted revolver from the inner pocket of his coat, "if he proves troublesome, I have a plaything here which will perhaps influence him."

In vain I protested, entreated, warned. I doubt if ever he heard half of what I said, so lost was he in his rapturous dream.

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"If Gabriella is the woman I take her to be, I will marry her," he concluded in his reckless, impetuous fashion, as he bade me good night. I knew how utterly useless it was to battle against any determination, however eccentric and capricious, in one of his nationality, one might as well try to break a block of granite as a Russian's will. I could only hope that his caprice would wear out with time.

From now on Ivan spent almost all his time among the gipsies. La Guenca seemed to have bewitched him. When away from her he was restless, irritable, and abstracted, taking no apparent interest in anything. He also spent a great deal of his money for very handsome presents. I pitied the fellow sincerely. He had fallen a victim to the diabolical fascinations of a woman without heart or conscience. One evening, wishing to see for myself how far things had gone between them, I proposed that I should accompany him.

The performance was the same as before. Afterwards we all assembled again in a restaurant. I was puzzled at first at the change in Pepe. He greeted us, if not graciously, at least with an outward show of civility. I soon understood. After supper he suggested a little game. My friend acquiesced at once. Ivan lost continuously. Watching the gipsy keenly, I discovered that he was playing with false cards.

When I was alone with Ivan, I had a long, earnest talk with him on the subject, and told him what I had seen.

"I knew it," he replied wearily. "But I am willing to lose a little money to keep him in good humour, and prevent him continually spying on Gabriella and myself."

"Did it never occur to you," I responded, "that she might be his accomplice?"

He sprang to his feet, livid with rage.

"How dare you!" he cried hoarsely.

For a moment I thought that he was going to strike me. I met his angry glance sadly but unflinchingly. His clenched hand dropped slowly to his side.

"Harris," he said, in a voice quivering with emotion, "you misjudge her on account of her surroundings. If you could only know her as I do! She is the bravest, noblest, truest woman I have ever met."

"Ivan!" I cried desperately, "you are mad! Throw off this spell. Be a man. Come away with me at once to Russia—Paris—anywhere; but come before it is too late. When once you have left this place, time and change will cure you of this folly."

For a moment a look of despair crossed his face.

"It is too late now," he replied, in a tone that permitted of no argument. "I love Gabriella more than my life."

"And she?"

"Harris, I fully believe that she returns my love. In a short time she hopes to be able to escape from her tribe and follow me to my own country. If I do not marry her," he added after a moment's pause, "I shall die!"

The next day I went with the lovers on a boating trip. We were drifting down the Guadalquivir at sundown. Gabriella was at the rudder; Ivan and I worked the oars. As La Guenca was free this evening, we did not think of returning until the silver light of the moon was streaming over the water. I persuaded my friend to let me manage the boat myself, and he, only too glad to be relieved, threw himself at his charmer's feet. They made a handsome picture. He strong and fair and radiant as a young sun-god, she dark, dreamy, mystical as fate.

"How beautiful is love," he murmured.

She stooped and pressed her lips passionately to his forehead.

"My beloved!"

We were slowly gliding past the golden tower which once held the treasures of the New World. At that moment a voice broke forth on the stillness of the night—low, thrilling, despairing like a warning of death. It was the lament of the fall of Granada.

"I am cold," murmured the gipsy, wrapping her shawl closer around her, as the last despairing notes died away on the evening air.

We, too, had been chilled by the song. We had all recognised the voice of Pepe, although no one spoke of it. Little more was said until we reached the landing. A false note had sounded in our gamut of pleasure. The harmony of our enjoyment had been disturbed.

A few days afterwards an important telegram called me to Paris. I parted from Ivan with a heavy heart. I could not conquer the feeling that our hands clasped for the last time. I think that he felt it also, for his blue eyes were clouded with a mist that looked like tears when the last moment came.

Six weeks later I read among the foreign news in a Paris paper the following:

SEVILLE, Sept 15th.—For some time past a troupe of gipsy dancers have been drawing large audiences to their entertainments in the Calle de Carbon of this city. The prima donna of the troupe is the famous Guenca, a woman of extraordinary beauty, but possessed of all the unscrupulousness of her tribe, and whose charms have ruined numbers of our young noblemen, who, blinded by her fascinations, have squandered large sums of money on her while her companions plundered them ruthlessly at cards.

The latest victim was a wealthy Russian, Ivan Kasanjew, whose reckless passion for her has been a matter of much comment. Yesterday morning his dead body, stabbed in five places, was found lying in the Alameda de Capuchinos.

A short, pointed dagger, such as is customarily carried by gipsies, was found near the corpse, covered with blood. The murderer is supposed to be one Pepe Aranjo, a member of the same troupe and the lover of the prima ballerina. The motive of the crime is presumed to have been jealousy.

Pepe Aranjo and La Guenca have disappeared together. It is said that they embarked on a French steamer for Lisbon. The authorities are on their track, but it is possible that they have made good their escape from the country before they can be overtaken.

This was the tragic ending of Ivan Kasanjew's mad infatuation.

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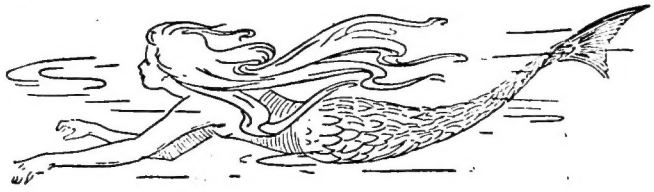

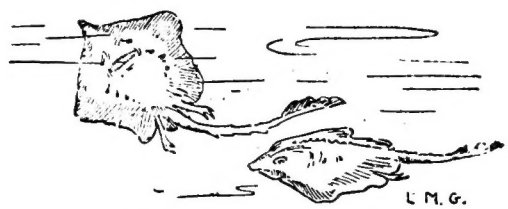

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Unearthed and Re-edited By Robert Machray.

Illustrated By Arthur Jules Goodman.

No. II.—THE FIRST BLACK FRIDAY.

Being a letter of one Mungo Murray, addressed to his grandson, Sir Oliver, of the City of London, banker, printed for the first time.

"My Dear Noll,

"You have frequently asked me to write down the story of that eventful day called Black Friday, and all that pertains to myself and to our family in connection therewith. Methinks it were best to comply with your request, and to set forth in writing a sort of history of the events of the '45 so far as they concern our own fortunes.

"My father, who was your great granddad, was of the well-known Highland house of Murray, and a man of some estate. I remember him not, for he died when I was a mere child, having succumbed to wounds which he had received fighting for King James — him whom the Whigs called the Pretender.

"Now that all these troublous times are past, and it is certain that no Stewart will ever again sit upon the throne, you will not be able to understand how it was that men such as he were well content to lose not only their property, but their lives as well, for that dearest of lost causes.

"Yet so it was.

"Even my mother, deprived of her husband by death, and of his estate by the Government of King George, never said one word in despite of the fallen dynasty, devotion to which had wrought her bitter woe.

"Then, when I was a little boy, she settled in the old grey city of Aberdeen, and, being in possession of some money of her own, was minded to make me a member of its famous Faculty of Advocates. But she died when I was a lad, and bade me choose whatever profession or calling I had a taste for.

"Now when I thought the matter over, I was ill content to stay in North Scotland—which, were it as rich as it is beautiful, would be the wealthiest country in the world. Being somewhat puffed up with the vanity and spirit of youth, nothing would suffice me but that I must come to London.

"Here, in the richest city on earth, I soon found that there were many persons who had no other occupation than the making of money, and that, not from the profits made in the trading in merchandise, but from their success in a game in which Chance played some part, but Wit more. I mean the buying and selling of stocks and shares of the debt of the nation, and of the Bank of England, and the like.

"Among the most prosperous of those who had dealings constantly on 'Change was Isaac Elnathan, the great Hebrew banker, who was, of course, no other than your grandmother's father. To his safe keeping I intrusted the money I had brought with me from Aberdeen, and after a time was lucky enough to be taken into his office. As the years went by, he gave me not a little of his confidence—the which I strove hard to gain ever more fully, and that for a reason which will presently appear.

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"I lived in his house, as was then the fashion, and there I met Leah, his daughter. Your mother, dear Noll, was lovely to look upon, for she was like my Leah, who bore her; but, lad, lad, never was any woman so sweet and winsome and bonnie as your grandmother. God gives me sometimes to see her in my dreams, and then the longest day is short with happiness.

"I loved her, and she me.

"How simple it seems when 'tis said!

"Yet never was anything less likely than that we would ever be married. It was for that object that I toiled and slaved for Elnathan, giving years of service with all the strength of my mind and body—somewhat after the fashion of a patriarch who loved the sister of another Leah.

"'Twas presumption, indeed. The daughter of a king of finance, a monarch of money, and I no more than that great man's clerk, for I was no more than that then. But I hoped. She was much younger than I, and her father had promised her to nobody, but——. Then I would grow cold at heart with fear of some possible rival, to whom Elnathan might wish to betroth her.

"Elnathan would not have been the sharp and wonderful man he was, if he had not seen something of our affection for each other, but he made no sign of noticing what was going on under his eyes. So time sped along, and quickly enough, for had not each day its own excitements, surprises, and ups and downs in the ever varied conflicts of which 'Change Alley was the field.

"Now that is a business, Noll, in which one hath always to beware of the bolt from the blue sky.

"With the suddenness of a hurricane there fell upon the kingdom, and more especially on London, which is its very heart, the tidings that Prince Charles Stuart, the son of that James for whom my father had lost lands and life, had landed in Scotland. Then we heard that he had succeeded in raising an army among the clans of the Highlands, and was to make a bold try to regain for the Stuarts the throne of their fathers.

"As to the way the tidings affected us, we were not long in finding out. One day Elnathan sent for me—this was towards the middle of 1745. When I entered his room, he had a dark scowl upon his face, and when he spoke it was with a sneer.

"'See, here,' said he, and he tossed over a letter to me. 'What think you of that, now?'

"The letter proved to be from one of our customers, a gentleman of the town, who had the sum of £20,000 at deposit with us. He requested that the money should be repaid him at once, alleging that now the young Pretender was in the country everything was in danger, and that the only safe place for money was some secure and secret hidingplace in the ground—'where,' wrote he, 'I shall soon follow it in all probability, for I am so overwrought with fear in my mind, and so overset in body by reason of a fearful cold in my head and in my bones, that I fear me I have not long to live.'

"He concluded his letter by asking that the money should be sent him as speedily as possible, if we would not be the death of him, in notes of the bank of the value of £1000 apiece.

"'That is only the beginning of troubles,' said Elnathan. 'However great or small the hubbub which the Prince shall make, it will be sufficient to disturb the market, and money will be called in on every hand, and stowed away, for fear of what may happen. What say you?'

"'Tis but what is to be expected,' I replied. 'Yet will it work both ways, for there will be the flow as well as the ebb of the tide.'

"'Aye, there will be some golden opportunities,' quoth Elnathan, while his face lighted up. 'Now, Mungo, you will get from the bank twenty-one notes of £1000 each, that's one extra for interest, and 'twill fix in his mind how much better it is to have his money with me earning something for him, than to have it buried and hid away.'

"I turned to do his bidding.

"'Stay!' cried he, with a burst of hearty laughter, 'go, fetch me also a bottle of hartshorn.'

"'A bottle of hartshorn?' cried I, in amaze.

"'Aye, even so, the bank notes are a plaster for his poor mind, and the hartshorn is for the cure of that terrible cold of which he maketh pretence. For 'tis naught sure but a pretence that cold of his.'

"Much was I tickled with the humour of the thing, nor could I fail to see that there was a certain cunning diplomacy in the action of Elnathan. For it was plain that a small matter such as £20,000 disturbed him so little that he was even able to make a jest of its return.

"So out I went, and got the notes from the Bank of England, and the hartshorn from the apothecary. And I wrapped the notes round the bottle, and so made a parcel, which I dispatched to our customer by a trusty messenger.

"I tell you this, as it gives a specimen of what was going on at that time, and also exhibits how true a knowledge of human nature your ancestor possessed, for the parcel came back to us two or three days afterwards, minus the hartshorn, and plus an apology.

"Now, my master could see nothing very terrible in the rising of the Scottish clansmen—'savages,' he called them in my presence, just by way, I fancy, of indulging a grim sort of pleasantry, of which his Highland clerk, myself, to wit, was the butt.

"'Twill come to nought,' said he. 'When the regular troops of the army come upon these savages, they will scatter them as the wind does chaff.' Even when it was known that Johnny Cope had been very thoroughly thrashed at Prestonpans by the said savages, Elnathan still held to his own way of thinking.

"'Twon't last,' said he.

"There was a kindly twinkle in his eye as he continued: 'Now, Mungo, which is it to be with you?

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Are you to continue to serve me, or are you going to turn your back on London, and become one of the young Prince's men?'

"I had told him something of my family history, and was therefore not unprepared for these questions of his. But, as far as I was concerned, I had no occasion to halt in mine answer. Had there been no Leah, it might, perhaps, have been different.

"'Surely, sir,' said I, 'you must know that your interests are next my heart. So long as you are satisfied with my efforts, I can have no wish to forsake your service.'

"But when Prince Charlie, after making himself master of the whole of Scotland, began his march into England, and had taken Carlisle, an event which fell out on the eighteenth of November, Elnathan's tune changed somewhat. Next we heard that the Prince was coming southward with his Highlanders in fine style, enlisting hundreds of recruits under his standard, and winning the hearts of men and women in Lancashire by his gay and courteous manners.

"Marching with great swiftness, the Prince and his clansmen reached Manchester on the twenty-seventh. This was news indeed, look upon it in any way that one cared to.

"Truly was it an evil time in 'Change Alley. Men of the highest standing, both as regards their integrity and their ability, looked at each other askance, wondering in their souls what was next to take place, and how far trust might be given. There was but little confidence either in each other or in the Government, and, therefore, it was that although there were but few transactions in the Funds, or, for the matter of that, in anything else, all securities began to sink in value, as people became more and more frightened.

"Elnathan, however, was not amongst those who took fright. He was amazed and disappointed at the success of the young Pretender, but stoutly maintained that there could be no doubt as to what the end would be. Even when everything seemed black enough, he still kept to this faith of his, albeit he could not but be influenced by the untoward state of the times.

"Now it is no longer a matter of report or rumour, but hath passed into the cold domain of history—all that happened to the Prince. Therefore proceed I to relate what befel me, and the house of Elnathan, in connection therewith.

"First of all, then—and it is a mysterious thing how works the strange hand of fate—the principal general, and by far the best soldier in Prince Charles's army, was no other than Lord George Murray, who was my father's cousin, as, of course, Noll, you know well. I had frequently pondered over Elnathan's remark about the 'golden opportunities,' and, as the news of the Prince's advance was confirmed, and appeared more and more terrifying, the idea came to me that in this relationship I might find just such a golden opportunity as my master had referred to.

"So, taking my courage in my hands, I made bold to submit a proposition to Elnathan. It was that I should journey northwards, join the Prince's army, make myself known to the general, my kinsman, and thus be in a position to be acquainted with their plans and movements. Two armies of the King were now in the field, not far from the Jacobite host, and it was on the cards that something decisive would occur ere long.

"If that were the case, and it all seemed very probable, I would be in an advantageous position for ascertaining the best or the worst, and would do my utmost endeavour to come with the information to London, so that Elnathan would know exactly how to act with respect to the market in 'Change Alley.

"Elnathan listened to what I had to say.

"'"'Tis well thought of,' said he. 'But have you considered that you are taking your life in your hands? There will be perils by the way, perhaps; there will be greater dangers to be encountered when you attach yourself to the Prince's troops, and who can say what may befal? 'Tis far safer here in London. Better think it over again, Mungo. And yet—you may do so great a stroke of business as to make the risk seem a trifle in comparison.'

"'"'Tis not,' said I, 'that I hold my life cheap, but there is that in my heart which urges me to attempt some great thing—a thing so great, indeed, that you will no longer regard me as your clerk, but as one who hath done you so vast a service that you will consider him rather in the light of an equal.'

"Elnathan glanced at me keenly, and yet not unkindly.

"'"Mungo,' said he, 'have I the name of a just man or not? You, who know most of my affairs, can best answer.'

"'"There is that in my heart which urges me to attempt some great thing.'"

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"I bowed my head. There was no juster man in all London than Elnathan, the Jew.

"'I take your meaning, Mungo, plain enough. 'Tis a partnership that is to be the reward of your success. Without more words, I agree. But what if you fail?'

"'Why, then,' said I, 'I will be no better and no worse than I am now.'

"'Surely better,' said he, with unusual gentleness. 'Tis not likely that any man would overlook and pass by the attempt even to do anything of this kind. Win or lose, I am not the one to forget it.' Then, with an abrupt change of manner, he went on: 'If you are resolved, I shall do this, as I think it may help us in the event of your success, and will not hurt us much should you fail.' To take advantage of such an opening in the market as you may be the means of making, it is necessary to have the command of a large amount of ready money. That I will get immediately.'

"I bowed again.

"'When do you start?' he asked, to which I replied that I would make ready at once, and depart with all possible speed. Thereupon he gave me letters to persons of importance at Dunstable, Northampton, and Leicester, who would be willing to be of any assistance I might need upon the way. Then he bade me not to stint myself as regards money, but to take what would furnish me forth handsomely.

"'Tis a time to spend,' quoth he.

"That evening, after supper, as I sat at a table exchanging glances and sometimes a sentence or two with Leah, Elnathan made a great show of being wrapped up, and utterly absorbed in a copy of *The True Patriot*, a sheet which had just been brought out by Mr. Fielding, who was afterwards so celebrated as the author of 'Tom Jones,' and which was devoted to the Whig interest.

"We renewed our lovers' vows."

"Seeing him occupied thus mightily with his paper, we drew our chairs together, and renewed our lovers' vows with many a fond and, perhaps, foolish word. I told her of the enterprise on which I was about to set out, and was greatly encouraged by her confidence that I would succeed,—as is the way of a loving woman.

"Next morning I was on horse early, fully armed, and, without more ado, rode out of town, making for St. Albans, and thence, by way of Dunstable, to Northampton, where I expected to hear of the whereabouts of Prince Charles and his Highland host.

"But when I arrived at Northampton, having made the journey in two days, the weather being favourable, by dint of hard riding, I could hear nothing with definiteness of the place where the Prince and his army were encamped.

"Procuring a fresh horse from the friend of Elnathan residing in that town, to whom he had given me a letter, I pushed on for Leicester. This place I discovered to be ablaze with rumours, but no certainties, and I was in some doubt as to what point I should next ride to. And here again Elnathan's correspondent was of service.

"For he had been informed that there was a small company of gentlemen, Jacobites, who were proceeding next day to join Prince Charles. Thinking that they might have more than an inkling of where he was, I offered to be of their party, which they readily agreed to when they knew that I was a kinsman of Lord George Murray.

"And so it came about that, on the fourth of December, we reached Derby, where the selfsame day had the Prince also arrived.

"'Twas a strange scene that met my eyes. Everywhere about the town were to be seen the tartans of the Highlanders, and my heart warmed towards them. The men were in high spirits, because they understood that they were to march upon London almost immediately. Inquiring of an officer for the head-quarters of Lord George, we were told that he was with His Highness at a house belonging to the Earl of Exeter, situated at the bottom of Full Street.

"It was now dark, and torches flamed along the street and in front of Lord Exeter's house, when, having made known my name and my business to the captain of the guard. I was shown into a waiting-room, where there were already many others. I was told that the Prince and Lord George and the other leaders were met in council, and that there was no saying how long a time might elapse before it would be over.

"Having found myself a seat in a corner, presently I was so overcome by the fatigue of my journey that

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I dropped asleep, notwithstanding the buzz of conversation all about me. How long I slept I do not know, but at length I was awoke by the sound of two voices, which came to me at first as if they had been heard in a dream, and then more sharply as I gathered up my wakening senses. The room was dimly lit, but not to such a degree that I could not perceive the faces and forms of the speakers.

"I learnt afterwards that they were the Prince himself and my kinsman, Lord George Murray. Seeing that I was awake, the younger of the two, who was the Prince, came over to me, and asked who I was. Thus it was that I not only saw, but also spoke with bonnie Prince Charlie.

"When I told him that I was of the Murrays, being a cousin of his principal general, the other came forward and made himself known. Then they questioned me about London, inquiring what help the Prince might look for there—to which I was not able to give any hopeful response.

"'Did I not tell your Highness,' exclaimed Lord George, 'that this was the case? The English are strangely backward in your cause. 'Twere not well to advance further, for we be too small an army.'

"'Then will I to London alone, rather than go back,' cried the Prince, and left the chamber suddenly in a temper.

"'Tis a noble spirit, brave, courageous, kingly, but headstrong,' said Lord George. 'Those of us who are older in war must count the cost, for he will not. The odds are too great. Five thousand clansmen, though they be as the whelps of lions, how can they prevail against thirty thousand, most of whom are trained and hardened troops?'

"His gallant figure seemed to shrink with weariness, and the weight of their evil fortune, and I saw two great tears of a sudden in those brave eyes of his. Then he clutched his sword, threw it upon the table, where it fell with a crash, and swore by the Splendour of God that there were but two courses open to them. One was to go on to London, as the Prince wished—that would be to die with him. The other was to go back to Scotland, where there was some chance of making a stand—that, at the worst, would be to die for him.

"'Back to Scotland! Back to Scotland! 'tis our only hope,' cried he.

"Then he asked me about the fortunes of myself, and also told me that there was to be a council of war next morning to decide which course was to be followed, but that he and the other generals were determined on a retreat. Asking me where I was to sleep that night, I replied that I would stay where I was, seeing it was late, and I knew not the town.

"'Tis where I shall stay myself,' said he, and forthwith leaning his head upon a table, he was in another minute fast wrapt in slumber, as is the way of the veteran of war.

"He was in another minute fast wrapt in slumber."

"Here then was news indeed, and I saw at once how valuable to me was the information I had received. I knew that the people of London, when they heard how far the Stuart army had penetrated into the country—within a few days' easy march of the capital, would be sorely dismayed, and that the market of 'Change Alley would be in a fine flurry. They would know that the Prince was at Derby at least two days before they could hear of his retreat northwards.

"'Was this my opportunity?' I anxiously asked myself.

"Lord George was awake before daylight, and, rousing me none too gently with a shake—for I had fallen asleep again—said: 'Get thee back to London, Mungo. You may be of great use to us there. For myself, I am resolved upon the retreat of the army. Anything else is madness!'

"Then I asked him if it would not be better to wait till the issue of the council of war was announced. He replied that I should go at once, as the meeting of the council could have but the one result. Calling for an attendant, he bade him bring one of his own horses for my use. In another hour I had left Derby behind, and was well on my way to Leicester. That night I was in Northampton. On the morning of the day afterwards, that is, on Friday morning, I was in London, more dead than alive.

"Oh, that wild ride, in which fear and hope chased me on, and yet above them both I experienced a feeling of exaltation, the source of which was my love for Leah. For the success of my ride would be *our* opportunity also.

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"A sorry sight was I, mud-bespattered, grimy, and dishevelled, as I drew up before Elnathan's door, but little did I think of that. The clatter of my horse's hoofs and my own shouts roused my master, and in another minute we were closeted together.

"Never had I seen Elnathan so agitated, whether it was because he was glad to see me again, or because of the terrible news that was shaking the town. While I had some refreshments he told me that messengers had reached London the night before, saying that Prince Charles was in Derby, that the road was open to London before him, and that he would reach the town in another week. There had fallen on every-

"In came a servant with white face and trembling lips."

one a great terror and dread of the Highlanders, and there was like to be such a panic as never was seen in 'Change Alley before.

"Could anything have happened more seasonably for my special information to have its full effect? So I felt, as I narrated to Elnathan what had befallen me, and how that even now the dreaded Highland host was in full retreat for Scotland. Now, he was a wonderful man, that great grandfather of thine. In an instant he became calm, impassive, purposeful, with his plan mapped out. 'Twas just as if he had been a general, aye, a conqueror, tasting the certainty of victory before ever the battle was fought.

"While we were together, in came a servant with white face and trembling lips.

"'The Bank—the Bank!' he cried. 'Tis beset on all sides by a vast crowd, all clamouring for their money.'

"'A run on the Bank,' said Elnathan. 'Doth not fortune serve us well? We shall be able to buy the Funds at the price of a song this day.'

"Then he rushed away to 'Change Alley, to take command of his forces on that field of battle, bidding me to come also when I had rested somewhat. After a couple of hours, thither I went.

"In the Alley, and in the streets round about it, there were hundreds, nay, thousands, of men, and women also, stark mad with terror; they cried, they wept, they fought, they cursed, they shouted like demons, for rage and fear had changed them into yelling fiends. Talk of Highland savages! Here were savages enough and to spare, though many of them were the greatest merchants in London.

"Then came a rumour that the Bank of England had closed its doors, and the Funds went down to 50—some said to 49. Then 'twas reported the Bank was still open, but cashing its notes in sixpences, which, of course, was a pardonable ruse to gain time.

"Elnathan, almost alone in that frantic mob, kept composed, although his air was gloomy, as if he, too, felt how serious was the state of things. Buying, buying, buying, stood he there all day, putting every farthing he possessed upon this great stake, and even pledging his word for more, while people thought he was clean crazed. The day closed with 'Change Alley in ruins, as it were, with but few exceptions, amongst whom the greatest was the house of Elnathan, the Jew.

"For, by the beginning of the following week, everyone was well aware that Prince Charles, greatly against his will, had been forced by his generals, and particularly by that kinsman of mine, Lord George, to beat a retreat from Derby, and so northwards to Scotland.

"Now the panic passed away, the terror was forgotten, the fear was changed into joy, and the price of the Funds, as a natural consequence, rose quickly. Then Elnathan sold at an enormous profit, realising an immense fortune, and I became his partner, and what was better, his son-in-law.

"Mungo Murray."

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THE WORK OF M. DE PARIS.

THE method of an execution in a foreign land probably few of us know much about. Generally speaking, we know that one country beheads with the sword, another with the guillotine, and that another strangles, but the processes of execution are very little known. The French use the guillotine in executing the death sentence. One hundred years ago it was a thing of life in its ferocity; in these latter decades of peace it does its work unnoted, but none the less with fearful accuracy and expedition. It is worth while to be put face to face with a picture of a French execution. Here is one, translated from the French. It is grim, deadly, realistic. The better to appreciate its details it should be borne in mind that the execution takes place in a square adjoining the prisons of La Roquette for juveniles; that the guillotine is painted red; and that the executioner, M. de Paris, is, from the nature of his business, detested by all.

THE GUILLOTINE.

1 A. M.—The air is cold, the sky grey-black. On the Place de la Roquette, stationed near their stacked arms, the municipal guards stamp their cold feet and talk under their breath. Under the leafless trees officers pace backwards and forwards. Now and then some passing journalist salutes them. It is early, but the adjacent streets are barred. The lights of the street lamps flicker on the helmets of the orderlies who reinforce the black lines of the police. Beyond the guards are night prowlers; men with their collars turned up over their ears, and bareheaded women.

"*Tiens!* There it is for this morning, Chouette!"

"You pay for drinks? Have you a countermark?"

"As for him, poor devil, he won't snuff much of anything, when his nose is in the basket!"

"He, Polyte! He, *là bas*—"

And coarse jests are exchanged.

In the wine shops men and women clamour and push each other. Among them are men of the world in fur-lined topcoats and silk hats. They drink standing at zinc counters cheek by jowl with thieves and cut-throats, whom they watch furtively. The small rooms are packed. The air is stifling. The waiters serve punch and coffee at all the tables. In a corner a woman, seated on a stool holding a child upon her knee, drinks hot wine.

2. A.M.—A policeman puts his head in at the door. "You must close, it is two o'clock."

"Oh, monsieur, just this once—just for to-day!"

"No. There has been no permission given. Close instantly; it is the order. You can open again at five o'clock. *Allons*, hurry up!"

Slowly the order is obeyed. Shutters are unwound, and the crowds pour out upon the pavement. The streets are dark. There are no lights but the flicker of the street lamps throwing lurid gleams into the raw mist.

"B—r—r! I give it up; we'll see nothing if we wait. Come on, Polyte!"

"*Nom d'un chien!* You think to draw me off? You know me better!"

"But we're freezing!"

"So much the better, it kills time!"

Carriages are arriving. Reporters get out of them, and showing their cards to the guards, pass into the inclosure. Then come men, close shaven; actors or singers, who have heard rumours of the execution as they come out of the theatre. They speak with the sergeant-de-ville on guard and bow low, with hats off, as they pass in.

On the Place de la Roquette, everyone talks to his neighbour. The people speak in low voices and stamp their feet on the frozen ground.

3. A.M.—La Petite Roquette, dark up to this moment, is awake. Shadows pass and repass on the lighted windows. "They begin there." A philosopher in the crowd points from Little Roquette to the other prison,

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looking black in the early morning, opposite. "They begin there to finish here!"

A rumbling of wheels comes from the distance, and the crowds peer towards the sound. Two black, heavy waggons roll down the Rue de la Roquette. The horses come at a trot. It is M. de Paris, the executioner, and his aids who bring the instrument of death. The carriages are drawn up in a side street. The crowds stop talking and press towards the black waggons. M. de Paris gets out first. He holds his umbrella in one hand; his silk hat is crushed down to his ears. He steps forward as if against his will. He is bent nearly double. He looks nervously to right and left and casts a frightened glance behind him; and, trembling on his rheumatic legs, he goes up to a policeman and whispers to him. He looks haggard and worried. He never likes to be watched at his work.

The policeman forces back the reporters. "*Allons!* gentlemen, step back a little, I beg of you! You annoy the executioner!"

The aids of the executioner have taken off their overcoats and are laying out the heavy beams of the guillotine on the frozen ground; and M. de Paris sees that his "accessories"—the box of sponges and buckets—are arranged in order on the borders of the walk. This is a line which must not be crowded, and he querulously calls to an orderly. "If anyone dares to cross that line," he whines, nearly whimpering, "I shall complain to the Ministry!"

4 A.M.—The heavy side-beams are standing upright. There has not been one stroke of the hammer! Each piece fits into its fellow. The sinister business is accomplished in the light of lanterns, and the moving lights bring into relief the copper worked into the wood. In the Rue de Merlin pale, curious faces are looking out. They see the lights dancing in the darkness. They have watched for days for these same precursory lights to come, heralding the spectacle. There are murmurs of a crowd of people pouring into the side streets from all directions. Now and then angry voices clamour out the name of the condemned. The soldiers draw in line still closer, and work back the crowd. Inside the cordon of the guard people have stopped walking to and fro. Each one presses nearer the deadly monster rearing its strong frame into the cold night of shadow. Each one plants his feet more firmly, prepared to see everything that there is to be seen by-and-bye, when the moment comes.

5. A.M.—On the summit of the side-beams the capital is set and the pulleys are in order. The magistrates have come. They walk slowly forward into the places reserved for them. They do not speak. Their faces are fixed and solemn. The immense razor is brought out; the aids of the executioner slide it into its groove and pull it into its place with a binding rope. Once—twice it rises and descends. It is heavy enough. A weight of seventy kilograms. It runs up to play its part and drops with a thud. It is perfect!

Someone laughs in the crowd. "We can have music; the instrument is in tune!" In front of the lunette the basket with the sawdust is ready for the bleeding head. M. de Paris throws a last scrutinising look upon his boxes; they are ready; and he goes away and hides himself behind one of the heavy waggons.

6. A.M.—"The Red Maiden" stands up waiting.

There is no more chattering in the crowd, which is increasing at every minute. It is bitterly cold. Now and then someone speaks to his neighbour in an undertone. People begin to think of the condemned for whom the pitiless machine is waiting. "Is he awake? Is he sleeping? Has he heard any of the sounds of preparation?—At what hour is the execution?"

"As usual, at half-past seven, at sunrise!"

People shiver. They begin to count the minutes. There is a slow clattering of horses' hoofs, and the rattling of sabres. The cocked hats of mounted soldiers pass, and people crane their necks to see them. "The gendarmes d'Ivry. The last escort. The escort of the dead!" They range themselves in line behind the guillotine. Mourners come out of the crowd; people push and struggle.

"Keep in your place! No partiality here. Don't push! No one sees any better than you do."

People are worn out and half frozen with waiting in the night. Each one tries to push aside the other—they struggle and exchange insults.

"Gentlemen, this noise is indecent. You will be heard from the prison. If you have any delicacy I beg of you!"

And the noise ceases. There is no more talking. If they speak at all it is as if they were speaking in the chamber of the dying.

7. A.M.—The six magistrates are going into the prison. The almoner of the prison follows them. He moves slowly with bowed head. He is nerving himself for his awful duty. In the grand court they halt. The finger of the great clock points to ten minutes after seven, and the order of the execution fixes the time at 7.30. The awakening of the condemned and the making of his toilet will take twelve minutes. They wait eight minutes in the grand court to adjust all things to the order of execution. The minutes seem like hours.

M. de Paris appears. He passes the magistrates with his dragging step. He salutes them with an unhappy air, and, followed by his aids, he goes into the clerk's office. After a moment the clerk of the prison enters upon his register, in the list of those who have left the prison—"Sortie" (gone out.)

"Delivered into the hands of the executor of capital sentences, in obedience to the instructions of the Procureur-General."

8 A.M.—It is dark yet, but day is breaking. The pale light flushes the east. The director of the prison moves forward.

"Now, gentlemen, if you will—"

The little procession moves forward, preceded by a guard. The locked and padlocked doors grind upon their hinges. There is a corridor; then a bare antechamber. One of the executioner's assistants brings a chair and places it in the centre of the room. In this room the last toilet will be made. Then come sombre offices. Very long they seem. Then the drying rooms. The stone slabs sound under the footfall. "Gentlemen, for mercy's sake! No noise, I beg of you!"

They have come to a cloister looking upon a field surrounded by high walls. There is a portion of the building set back from the front; there are three iron doors. The guard turns a key carefully, noiselessly, in the lock, and they go in. A puff of heated air strikes their faces. Two guards rise up in the room and stand waiting. In a corner of the room a man is sleeping on a camp bed. The little procession halts round the bed. They uncover, as if standing over an open grave when the first clod falls upon the coffin. There is an awful silence, a hesitating in mute anguish. The director gently puts his hand on the shoulder of the sleeper. The sleeping man springs up in his bed, awake, and looks about him with haggard, appealing eyes.

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"Your appeal has been rejected and the President has refused to listen to your prayer. Be brave!"

The condemned man is stunned; his eye wanders. There is an awful pause, and then the almoner draws near and, embracing him, whispers to him: "*Mon enfant*" (my child).

And, while the trembling hands essay to draw on the poor vestments in which, for the last time, he is to appear on earth, the priest continues to whisper to him and to embrace him.

What an unending stretch it seems now to the *salle de toilette* (dressing room). The condemned crosses it, sustained on either side by a guard. The executioner approaches. He puts his hand upon the victim's shoulder and presses him gently into the chair. He takes possession of him. From this moment no earthly power can cheat him of his prey. It is his. He has given his receipt for it.

The shirt collar is cut off, and the feet are bound. The hands are tied behind the back. They tie a handkerchief round his neck, and they go out. He is livid. His steps falter like the steps of a child learning to walk. M. Paris leads the way. The door opens and the blinding light falls in upon them. It is broad day. Framed in the open door, the picture is grand and terrible. There are the gleaming helmets of the guards. There is a metallic clash of arms. The sabres flash. There is a tremendous movement as the sea of heads sways to right and left. A silence. Sharply set against the grey background of La Roquette the two great red arms suspend a razor ready to fall. The people bare their heads. In the leafless branches of the trees the sparrows chatter. From the adjoining streets the crowd, waiting and seeing nothing, growls. The whistle of a locomotive tears the air, and people shiver. It seems like a shrill cry for pity. A horse neighs. The prison clock knells the half hour. The aids of the executioner seize their victim. A cry gurgles through the livid lips: "*Vive! A bas!*"

They throw him upon the plank, and his head presses forward under the binder as his body turns. There is an instant of horrible delay. As usual, M. de Paris is too weak for his task. Then his trembling hand goes out; the button works; the knife falls; a bleeding head rolls in the sawdust in the basket.

Ca y est! (It is finished.)

There is a clash of arms, and the light gleams on the polished steel. The troops wheel and return to their quarters.

In the crowd the people laugh—half scared. Their faces are green from excitement and lack of sleep; they are nervous and impatient.

"Is that all?"

"*Ma foi!* What would you have?"

"My compliments, my neighbour! You are pale."

"Pale yourself! To the devil with you."

"Liar!"

"Brute!"

Women yawn aloud. Some of them take little dancing steps and hum airs from the café-concert.

"C'est ta poire, ta poire, ta poir—e
C'est ta poire, qu'il nous faut."

The crowd babbles.

"Did you see how pale he was?"

"Eh, *oui!* He had an incurable headache!"

"How he threw himself back when he saw the knife!"

"He died pitiably!"

"On the contrary, he died well!"

There is a murmur—the cracking of a whip. Look out, there! It is the dead waggon going away, dragged at a gallop followed by its escort, the gendarmes d'Ivry, in the ugly hats. The almoner follows in his *fiacre*.*

There is an uproar in the crowd. A Cabot from some cafe-concert has dipped his handkerchief in the blood which Deibler's workmen are hurrying to sponge away. The crowd pursues him and hoots after him as he brandishes his bloody trophy.

Beyond the first barrier are people who have passed the entire night waiting, well aware of the fact that they can hope to see nothing—yet waiting still, held there by an inexplicable fascination of man for man when he is about to die, a drawing towards the wretched creature who stands upon the brink of the grave, not knowing it, ignorant of the hour of his death, while the crowd waits for it, knowing the hour to a minute.

Among the worn-out, haggard beings beyond the barrier someone cries out. He has recognised his neighbour—a woman with drawn features.

She was the wife of M., who finished on this very spot two years ago. She never misses an execution. She strains her eyes in an indefinable gaze after the black waggon which moves off in the distance, followed by the gendarmes d'Ivry and the *curé*. She climbs into a *fiacre*, and the crowd chases, howling.

The crowd disperses, and the clerk of the court goes up to the office of the registrar of the Eleventh Ward of Paris and sets down on the record the certificate of death:

"Died this morning, Place de la Roquette, at 7.30."

Ca y est!

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* It is the custom immediately after an execution to carry the dead body under escort through the cemetery in semblance of burial. If the dead has friends, they may demand the body. If unclaimed, custom gives the body to the medical students of Paris. Pranzini, who was guillotined in the autumn of 1887, was phenomenal in physical development. His body was given to the medical students, and a scandal (presumably founded on fact), ran round Paris that souvenir pocket-books had been made from his skin. Owing to this outrage upon public manners it was for some time under discussion whether the medical students should be given the freedom of the bodies of dead criminals.

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The Tale of the Yellow War.

BY M. P. SHIEL.

Author of "The Man-Stealers," "Prince Zaleski," "Shapes in the Fire," "The Rajah's Sapphire," etc.

SUMMARY.

Yen How, a shrewd Chino-Japanese doctor, falls desperately in love with Ada Seward, an English nursemaid. His advances are rudely repulsed, however; but he leaves England with a fixed determination to win the object of his affections in spite of all opposition.

Yen How goes first to Japan as a Japanese, where he becomes intimate with the prime minister, Marquis Ito, to whom he proposes a league between the two races of China and Japan, and an immense scheme by which Europe may be reduced to a waste, and China become the Empress of the Earth with scarcely an effort of her own. He then goes to China and becomes virtual ruler of that nation. In the course of a conversation which he has with Li Hung Chang he unfolds his scheme for setting all the European Powers against Great Britain. After the slaughter China will step in and conquer the remnants of the armies.

War is declared between Great Britain and France and Germany and Russia. The British fleet meets the Allied ships in Mid-channel and a battle ensues. Although the British vessels are outnumbered by two to one, the superior tactics of the British, and of John Hardy, a consumptive midshipman and a genius for modern warfare (who escapes on the *Jupiter* from the fight, and rams all the transports some distance away), result in the destruction of the Allied fleet. Hardy is ill for a time, and on his recovery decides to go to China. Before going, however, he endeavours to obtain a promise of marriage from Miss Bosey Jay, a young lady artist, but is refused. He goes to the Palace Theatre of Varieties, and there meets Ada Seward, the nursemaid with whom Yen How is in love. She sends him home intoxicated, and a week later he is in Paris, where he has a row with Edropol, the Bulgarian duellist. John, however, does not fight, but goes to Berlin, and from thence to Petersburg. Here he sends a letter to Bobbie, his old servant in England, and starts out for China by the overland route. Yen How organises an army of 400,000,000 souls—men, women, and children—to overrun Europe when the time is ripe. He is sitting in his garden when the capture of John Hardy is announced to him.

John is brought before Yen and they quarrel. The former fires at the Chinaman, but the bullet strikes a breast-plate of steel and does no harm. John is seized and thrown into prison. Meanwhile, the British China squadron, failing to obtain the promised assistance from Japan, engages the Allied fleet, and defeats it, but at a cost of all the ships but three, which are shortly afterwards chased and attacked by the Japanese fleet. Affairs now assume a serious aspect in Europe, and the British rout the Germans at New Brandenburg with a loss of 150,000 men. Foo-chee loves Ah-lin (they are in the same Chinese regimental company), but the latter is loved by Sin-wan, a warder of the Imperial Prison. Ni-ching-tang is Foo-chee's father (although Sin-wan does not know this), and one of the scullions of Yen How's kitchen. John Hardy is cruelly tortured by Sin-wan, acting under Yen How's instructions. Foo-chee and Ah-lin go clandestinely to an eating house. Sin-wan suspects, but cannot track them. He vows to kill Foo-chee.

CHAPTER XIX.

Sin-wan.

The next evening, at about six, John Hardy lay on his back on the bed of his prison.

He was conscious that it was near the hour when Sin-wan would appear.

His feet were so gashed and raw from his run over the glass, that he had not stood since he had been thrown the previous night upon the bed. For two days he had eaten nothing, being sick of his long woe. He was not far from death now.

"How long, O Lord? How long?" This was the burden of his feeble thought.

But he retained an intense interest in the nature of the added pangs which *this* day had in store to bring him.

When the key turned, he sprang upright, though, at the effort, the wounds in his feet broke forth into fresh bleeding.

Sin-wan entered, and at his entrance this time John Hardy's flesh writhed like a twisting serpent from his feet to the roots of his hair.

Fire was the instrument of torture at which he felt the most horror. And Sin-wan had now with him a brazier, which swung from his fingers by a handle.

In the brazier glowed and flashed the living coals of flame.

He had in his hand no other instrument that John could see. But John, by this time, had learnt to know that when the instruments were at first invisible, then, in general, the agony was the most relentless.

And now, at the sight of the flame, feeling himself too hopelessly feeble to pass through any further torture that day, John Hardy, by an impulse, did what he had never done before. He fell upon his knees, and stretched out his clasped hands in an attitude of meek supplication to the Chinaman.

Sin-wan was a man; he had the limbs and bodily structure of the human being. Who could say whether if within him, too, some trace of the divine origin of man might not linger, some throe of love, some sob of pity? In John's eyes, as he knelt, welled a world of mute pleadings.

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But the Chinaman showed no sign of having seen him. He deposited the brazier in a further corner, took some small metal objects from a fold of his robe, dropped them on the floor, and approached the kneeling-form. He proceeded to bind him as before, hands and feet, to the chair. But this time, first of all, he took off John's shirt from the upper part of his body, leaving it to hang downward from the waist.

When this was done, he went back towards the fire, took up two of the six small metal objects, which he had dropped, and put them on the fire to heat.

The six metal objects consisted of four tiny Latin capital-letters in iron. They were the letters: A, S, Y, H,—the initials of Ada Seward and Yen How; there were also a roll of iron wire and a pair of pincers.

It was the intention of Yen How to print the four letters all over the body of John Hardy—on his breast, on his two arms, on his thighs, on his back: two at a time; two each day.

And the letters of the first day, as Yen How had ordained in compliment to his queen, were to be A and S.

But, as usual, Yen How had no idea of inflicting the mere brutal pang of a burn upon his victim; some mental refinement of pain must mix with the scream of the physical nerves.

Sin-wan took one of the two iron letters from the fire with the pincers, and holding it off from him approached John Hardy. The iron emitted a red glow, and seemed to burn into the eye-sight of the staring eyes of the victim.

When his bare chest could feel the radiated heat of the iron, his torturer stood, and held the metal steadily still. And so, for a few minutes he remained; and then returned and replaced the iron in the fire, without having touched John with it.

And now he climbed and stood upon the table, the roll of wire in his hand. The three lanterns hung from the ceiling by three hooks near to open spaces in the boarding of the ceiling, through which the candles were placed in the lanterns. Over one of these hooks Sin-wan threw a length of wire; and over another another length of wire. The three hooks were very near to each other.

With one end of each of the two pieces of wire he made a half-loop; and at once hurried to the fire, snatched up the red hot letter A with the pincers, and hung it upon one of the loops; then the S, and hung it upon the other. Their weight was sufficient to make the wires run through their supporting hooks; and they fell upon the marble floor.

Sin-wan now gathered the other two ends of the pieces of wire, and secured them to a point in the wall, having drawn the two letters some inches from the ground. In his hand he held a piece of bamboo, and with this, standing by the side of the wires, he struck first one of the letters, and then the other gently forward.

The two letters began to swing to and fro through the chamber, with uneven motions, one this way, one that. And right in the line of their movement sat John Hardy.

It depended entirely on the force of the propulsions which Sin-wan imparted to the letters with the bamboo, whether or no they touched the chest of the bound victim.

Sometimes they touched, and left behind them, as they swung back, a whiff of smoke. Sometimes they touched twice in succession, one, or both. Sometimes they were only expected—with shrinking horror, and suspended breath,—and did not touch at all.

It was a monstrous torture—the worst he had yet suffered—this coquetry of pain—these fleeting, incalculable kisses of the hot and dancing letters. For every kiss—a whiff of smoke.

Let us draw a veil over his agonies. His mouth was wide, bawling—his eyes straining from their sockets; and at the tension of every fibre of his soul and body, his hair whitened—his skin grew sore—he lived through centuries—he became an old man.

It was some twenty minutes before the see-saw of the swinging wires ceased. Sin-wan hurriedly left his post, ran toward John, and bound his eyes with a cloth. What happened within the next five minutes John did not know. He strained his ear to detect a sound, though he kept on mechanically bawling in a lower key. But he heard nothing. In reality, Sin-wan was reheating the metals to redness; and his noiselessness had for its motive the fact that he wished to take John by surprise.

When the two bits of metals were of a bright glowing red, he passed one limb of the pincers inside the top of the A, and the other limb inside the upper curve of the S, and, holding them so together, at once trotted eagerly and silently upon John.

An appalling scream broke forth, wondrously like the cry of a cat in the extreme of physical anguish. Sin-wan had suddenly clapped the hot pieces upon the middle of Hardy's chest, and held them there. The metal sank, as into a bed of soft luxury, into the flesh, frizzling forth a steaming smoke and reeking stench.

* * * * *

At the exact moment when John Hardy's spirit fainted, and he lost the sense of pain, Foo-chee and Ah-lin met in one long embrace of love.

Toward this they had been drawn and swept for days, and now the two trembling dewdrops had trembled into one.

It was outside the walls of Pekin, and every single member of Foo-chee's and Ah-lin's company had swarmed back into the town; for the drilling of the drilled was over. And only these two were left.

And Foo-chee said:

"Ah-lin."

And Ah-lin said:

"Foo-chee."

And Foo-chee said:

"I am feeling happy, Ah-lin; for we are here where none can see us, and the moon which is rising there is pleasant to see, though her face is round."

And Ah-lin said:

"Her face is broad in a laugh of joy, Foo-chee! And do you like a woman with a broad face, Foo-chee, or with a long?"

"I like a woman with a long face, Ah-lin," said Foo-chee, "like yours, Ah-lin."

And Ah-lin replied:

"I am not feeling at all unhappy, Foo-chee."

And it was then that the two dewdrops trembled into one in a long embrace.

A really long one: for it began a minute before the closing of the gates of Pekin, and it lasted a minute after it. And had they had any idea of the real state of affairs, they would have felt like two very shattered and dislocated dewdrops indeed.

It was Ah-lin who woke first from her trance, and she woke from it with a start that made her pigtail wriggle, and she whispered an awful pallid word into the ear of Foo-chee, and together they started toward the gates.

They were shut out, they were hopelessly late. Pekin refused them. They must spend the long night without.

Ah-lin had an instinct that this meant death for her beloved, perhaps for herself also.

They stood hand in hand, and the upper corners of their slanting eyes went very high indeed.

Still, a whole night hand in hand with the beloved is not nothing. They walked away with a happiness troubled, but not destroyed.

An hour later Sin-wan and Ni-ching-tang were ransacking a certain area of Pekin, one for his son, the other for Ah-lin and her lover, but separately, unsuspected by each other. As for Sin-wan, his knife was bright and white.

"Oh, where is Foo-chee?" said Ni-ching-tang to himself. "Is my son dead?"

The suspicion grew upon him, it became a certainty. He

hurried back to the Imperial City, and made inquiries for Sin-wan at the prison. Sin-wan, he was told, had obtained a scroll to pass in and out of the sacred precincts, at any hour of that night that he chose.

Soh! Sin-wan was abroad then, and if Sin-wan was abroad, then it must be that Foo-chee was dead.

Ni ching-tang went from the prison straight to the palace of Yen How, and he descended into the vaults wherein was his sleeping-room, and he held the reeking flame of a saucer-lamp of earthenware over a box, and into the depths of the box he dived. He brought up two blue phials, and a broken joss-stick, one of the phials contained a poison, and the other a non-poisonous drug, and this last he put into his bosom.

Then he re-clasped the box; and at once he fell upon his knees, bowing his body and folded hands up and down, touching the cold plaster with his forehead. And from his lips came groans of prayer. And he burnt incense to the gods.

Then he went up again, and out from the Imperial precincts. He, too, was provided that night with a scroll of permit.

Onwards he went, walking very fast. And as he treaded the intricacies of Pekin, he was engaged in a strange continuous effort of mind; the effort to recall all the English words he had ever known.

Once, long ago, he had served in the kitchen of an English family in Canton, and had then been quite a master of pigeon English. But now he found his vocabulary wondrously small. On he went, cudgelling his brains, through the dark and swarming vastness of the city.

Ni-ching-tang was a great man, if patience alone can make a man great, for he searched all that night for Sin-wan, and did not find him. So was Sin-wan a great man, if patience can make a man great, for he searched all the night for Foo-chee, and did not find him. But towards the break of day, as he sat drinking *samshu* in a den, Sin-wan had an idea. He was a drunkard, and could be inspired by drink; nor was he now sober. His idea was that Ah-lin and Foo-chee were not in the city at all, but without it.

He went back once more to the dwelling of Ah-lin to inquire if she had not yet come home. And then, hearing that she had not, he said:

"Fearing me, they have fled from the city together, and are now at Tungchow. To Tungchow, therefore, I will go. For the edge of my knife has the itch this night, till Foo-chee scratch it for me."

But it happened that while Sin-wan was crying aloud from the street to inquire for Ah-lin, Ni-ching-tang had come to inquire also whether one Ah-lin was there. And as the day was prone to break, Ni-ching-tang, far behind Sin-wan, was cautiously shadowing him toward the city-gate which leads out upon the Tungchow road.

Sin-wan waited there twenty minutes, and when the gates opened, he passed swiftly through under the crowding camels, the gall of malice and yellow jealousy rankling bitterly in his jaundiced soul.

To kill—to hew, and slice, and stab—a ravening hunger for this red breakfast was upon Sin-wan. He had had a comfortless night, a night of dark thought and impulse, and the hot *samshu* was talking hot things to his head.

And surely the gods were on his side—anxious for nothing that morning were they but how to provide a red breakfast for Sin-wan! See how they draw up the curtains of night for him; and now the day has that very-early-morning greyness for which one can find no adjective to express its utter yawniness; and now, *just as it is light enough*, something makes Sin-wan turn his head to the left—and he sees.

But poor Ni-ching-tang is struggling frantically among the mules and camels, which press inwards and outwards through the just-opened gate-way; and he has got jammed there, and the man is nearly mad in his agonised struggle to get free; for Sin-wan has passsed through, and he has lost him.

Foo-chee, together with Ah-lin, was fast asleep, as was also Ah-lin, they sitting with their backs propped against the outer surface of the wall, between two buttresses, not very far from the gates.

Sin-wan walked up to them, smiling, lest one or the other should be awake, and see him; and the knife-handle was in his palm, and the blade up his wide sleeves. And when he was right over them, and saw how they breathed heavily, and how the confidence of old love was in their careless embrace, he drove the knife first into Ah-lin with a loud breath, and she sighed, and died.

Saw how they breathed heavily, and how the confidence of old love was in their careless embrace.

And then, with loud breaths, he drove it several times into Foo-chee, and he sighed, and died. And then into Ah-lin again, and then into Foo-chee again, he drove his knife.

"Dog's gall," he said, as he turned away, and found himself face to face with Ni-ching-tang.

"What, Sin-wan, is that you?" said Ni-ching-tang—"oh, *I* can see what you have been after. Ho! ho!"

"Those are they I told you of," said Sin-wan. "I have done what I said I would do, Ni-ching-tang."

"So I see, Sin-wan! Well, it is the only way—the only way."

"As for you, you will tell no one, Ni-ching-tang?"

"Poh! not I. For why should I? I who have known you these eight months, and the two dead not at all. Poh! see how they lie—still embraced. Are you sure they are well dead, Sin-wan?"

"Oh, well dead."

"They should be. The man—he has one, two, three, four, five stabs—yes, five—ugly wounds, too. The knife went deep each time. What was his name—Foo-chee? Ah, well, no more Foo-chee now—no more Foo-chee."

"Let us be going, Ni-ching-tang. For watching dead dogs is not pleasant to the corners of the eye-balls."

"But *I* feel pleasure while looking upon them, Sin-wan; and the middle of the eye is not offended by the sight of them sitting together—young things, too. But you leer obliquely upon them, Sin-wan, having slain them, through the corners of your eye-balls, and so receive disagreeable feelings from their sight."

"Still, let us be going—let us be moving away, Ni-ching-tang."

"Well, as you wish it, Sin-wan, let us be moving. But they look very well together, Foo-chee and Ah-lin—Foo-chee, with his five gashed wounds and her arm behind his neck. A young man, too, he seems to me—a seller of incense-sticks, I think you said. No more incense-sticks now for Foo-chee—and no more Foo-chee now at all, Sin-wan. Well, well—well, well. It was Foo-chee and Ah-lin: and now it is no Ah-lin any more, and no Foo-chee at all. Five stabs, too, and ugly wounds all. One would have done the work, but he got *five*, well home. Oh, they are well dead, Sin-wan!—have no fear. But Foo-chee has no brother, I hope, no brother to avenge his death, Sin-wan?"

"I care not."

"With horrid torture, Sin-wan?"

"Poh! he was a brotherless dog."

"Well, if that is so. . . But your walk is staggering, and your eye wanders. We will have a morning drink together in a drink-place which I know. And then to the day's work. . . ."

They re-entered the gates. A reaction had come now upon Sin-wan; his nerves were unstrung from their high tension, and the *sam-shu* swam stalely in his turgid brain. He followed Ni-ching-tang as a lamb to the slaughter.

Ni-ching-tang led him down into a foul, dark cellar, where drink was placed before them. And into one of the two calabash-cups Ni-ching-tang poured a liquid from a blue phial.

Sin-wan had thrown himself sullenly upon a plank projection near the black earthen floor; and Ni-ching-tang handed him the draught.

CHAPTER XX.

"The Hundred and Eighty."

The draught was non-poisonous; but Sin-wan had hardly drunk half the contents of the cup when he fell back, fast asleep.

And now, when no eye but God's could see him, the malice of a fiend worked and twisted in the face of Ni-ching-tang. He took Sin-wan's knife, and he ran the edge of the blade gently, almost playfully, along Sin-wan's

Then he sallied forth.

throat, and over his face, and round the roots of his pig-tail, revelling in his sense of power, wallowing in that sweet lust of cruelty which brings to the Chinaman the same keen delight which bodily forms of enjoyment bring to the Western.

He ran the knife-edge along Sin-wan's skin; but he had not the least intention of hurting him. The pleasure of self-restraint with which he kept his itching fingers from violence was exquisite.

The Chinese theory of vengeance is not, like the Hebrew, "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth"; it is, "two eyes for an eye, and thirty-two teeth for a tooth."

Ni-ching-tang could easily have killed Sin-wan, as he slept there; but, had he done so, he would have despised himself as a weak and bungling boor.

For vengeance to be complete and satisfying, the victim must know *who* it is that is taking vengeance upon him, and *why* he is doing it; and the avenger must know that the victim knows.

Under these conditions, the longer the period which the vengeance occupies in its accomplishment, the sweeter the cud of satisfaction which the avenger chews.

Ni-ching-tang intended that, for the murder of his son, Sin-wan should suffer weeks of torture before death. And although it was beyond his power to inflict these tortures with his own hands (as he would have wished), yet he knew that it was easy for him to cause them to be inflicted by hands stronger than his own.

He did not lose much time in the self-indulgence of running the knife-edge over Sin-wan's throat and

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face. Presently, he put down the knife, and he dived his hand into Sin-wan's bosom. From thence he took out Sin-wan's permit to pass in and out of the Imperial gates, and also an Imperial mandate authorising the Keeper of the Prison Keys to deliver a certain key to Sin-wan.

With these two rolls of paper in his own bosom, Ni-ching-tang ascended the narrow earthen steps, and at the entrance above met the keeper of the drink place yawning his eyes into invisibility against the door. Ni-ching-tang told him that a man, holding position in the Imperial precincts, was asleep below, and did not wish to be roused.

"Let him sleep: he will wake himself," said Ni-ching-tang.

Then he sallied forth. He twisted at a steady trot among a number of alleys, and stopped at a gaudy bamboo-umbrella booth, where an early-morning merchant was lounging desolately. Ni-ching-tang spoke some hurried words low in the merchant's ear, and the merchant nodded, listening; then disappeared down a court; and in three minutes returned, leading a mule by a rope.

Ni-ching-tang scrambled on to the back of the mule; tossed his hand in token of thanks; drove his heels into the outstanding ribs of the mule, and went galloping away.

He traversed in this way two lengths of intervening street, and, still galloping, passed through the city gate which he had lately entered with Sin-wan. He turned the mule's head eastward toward Tungchow.

Tungchow, as we have said, is a small village about four, or possibly five, miles from Pekin. It is, as it were, the "port" of Pekin, for it stands on the Peiho, Pekin itself not being a river-city, as the geography-books wrongly assert.

At Tungchow, Ni-ching-tang had a nephew. And this nephew was the owner of three river boats, two of them fitted with junk-sails, the third a mule-boat, all three traders, down the Peiho with Tientsin, in millet, rice, and rape. In twenty minutes Ni-ching-tang, at the river side, was talking to his nephew from the mule's back. And Ni-ching-tang said:

"Which of the three boats are here, Li-kien?"

And Li-kien replied:

"The mule-boat is here, and also the *Taku*, which lies there where you see."

"The *Taku* has a junk-sail, Li-kien?"

"Yes."

"Then I will buy the *Taku* from you."

"I cannot sell the *Taku*, Ni-ching-tang."

"It is a lie, Li-kien, for you can, and you will. At the waning of the next moon I will pay you for her three hundred *tael*, which is a good reward, in silver pieces. For your cousin, Foo-chee, is dead—and there will be no more Foo-chee any more now at all, Li-kien; for he has been murdered by five stabs, and ugly wounds all. And it is necessary, in order that his slayer should die with horrid tortures, that you sell me your boat, the *Taku*, without much talking. And now you see that you told a lie in saying that you could not, Li-kien."

"It was a lie," admitted Li-kien.

"And the part which *you* shall take in avenging your kinsman," went on Ni-ching-tang, "shall be this, Li-kien. You will put on board the *Taku* rice, and spirit, and water, and fuel, and a rudder-oar, and everything which a man may want for a voyage down the Peiho, and a voyage over the sea, during a week, or more. This you will do. And this also; you will wait here near the *Taku*, all the forenoon if it is to be so, till you see a young man come riding on a mule; he will be wrapped up from head to foot in a great mantle, so that not much of his face and nothing of his head shall be seen. His face shall be yellow like a Chinaman's, but give a keen look into his eyes, and you will see that he is no Chinaman, but an English dog. You will put him on board the *Taku*, Li-kien, and you will hoist the sail for him, for he is without strength, and you will send him on his way alone. And, as you send him on his way, burn an incense, that he may go to his journey's end in safety; for, if he be re-captured, Sin-wan, who slew your cousin, will be tortured, but not killed; but, if he escapes wholly, then Sin-wan will be killed after he has been horribly tortured."

Li-kien pondered, and then objected.

"But one man in the *Taku*, he must needs be cast away, unless he be——"

"He *is* a sailor, Li-kien, and do not fear. And be sure you place in the *Taku* a drawing of China, and instruments such as are used by sea-faring men as the signposts of the ocean. For he can doubtless read such things; and it is necessary for him to arrive at Kiao-chau, where he will meet with his countrymen, and be slain with them when they are slain: but none will know that it is *he*; and Sin-wan will die. The mule you will keep till I send for it."

Immediately the old Chinaman turned the mule's head, and galloped back to Pekin.

All his movements now were characterised with an intense haste, and yet with a certain calm which did not forsake him.

He had much to do, and yet he did not stop to think of anything; he did not forget anything; everything seemed pre-arranged.

Within the prison he was unknown, but he had the Imperial stamp, which opens every door, in the form of Sin-wan's papers.

When he presented himself before John Hardy he had in his hands pigments, costume, and everything ready for the necessary disguise.

At a new face John Hardy started. He anticipated now some new torture, to be carried out by a still more subtle agent than Sin-wan.

As for Ni-ching-tang, he spoke not a word, simply doing his will swiftly on the impotent captive. He painted his face, he dressed him. And all the time he was cudgelling his brains to remember all the English words he needed to tell John Hardy what he was to do.

He found, however, that there was one fact of the situation which all but baulked his plans. John Hardy was weaker than Ni-ching-tang had counted upon. If Hardy's mind was in as feeble a state as his body, it seemed certain that Sin-wan would not die.

He took the dazed captive of Yen How under the arms, supporting him, and half-dragged him forth. And while John Hardy was still wondering to what new experience of pain he was being hurried, he was in the open air. And still Ni-ching-tang spoke no word.

With Ni-ching-tang's own permit, and with Sin-wan's, the two passed beyond the Imperial precincts, Ni-ching-tang lifting after him the lagging steps of Hardy. What was happening to him, John could not dream, but yonder, beyond doubt, was the sky, and there the sailing clouds, and under them a breeze of heaven which went blowing gladly toward the sea.

It was not possible that he was free. He did not believe it. In his profound distrust of Heaven and of earth, he denied it. He was mad again—it was a new torture—the most fiendish of all.

But when he found himself beyond the gates—and there around him spread the wide plain—and there, tethered to a tree drowsed the waiting mule—and there above him was the vast vault, and the free and gadding airs—what could he think? A strange low, whimpering sound—as feeble as can be imagined—as thin as the plaintive whine of a very old and senile man—came from his lips, and two forbidden tears rolled down his cheeks.

He was wrapped in a long robe of soiled silk, which covered the hat of straw on his head and descended to his feet, hiding his rags beneath; and on his feet Ni-ching-tang had put felt slippers. Thus attired he was pushed and manœuvred by the Chinaman to the back of the mule. The rope was put into his hand; and it was then that, for the first time, Ni-ching-tang spoke a word.

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Ni-ching-tang had need of his whole English vocabulary to express now all he had to say. For quite half-an-hour he went on talking, and it was evident that the scheme which he was now putting into execution must have been long meditated; for his instructions to John Hardy how to secure his safe arrival at Kiao-chau were as minute as possible. In his uncouth and tentative English he gave some idea of the formation of the harbour; and he also spoke of the position in which the stranded *Iphigenia* lay, pointing out to Hardy that the cruiser would serve as the chief landmark to warn him when he arrived at his destination. He gave John his own name and that of his nephew. Finally, he handed John a sharp knife with which to commit suicide in case of sudden recapture; and ended up by saying:

"Am got you anything to question me?"

Yes; John had something to ask. He said:

"Yes—One Question."

And he waited a minute before he asked it.

"I owe nothing to Yen How, do I, for my present freedom?"

He repeated the question thrice, and no sooner had Ni-ching-tang gathered its meaning, than instantly his head went shaking in a series of vigorous "No's."

"No, no, no," he went; "you no goee believe that, mind! You getee catch—getee catch! Yen How catchee you—sharp—killee you!"

Good; all this, then, was not due to any clemency of Yen How's. Even *then*, at that moment of feebleness, when he was still hardly beyond his prison-walls—John Hardy shrunk from hearing that there existed anything good, or human, or redeeming in the Chinese character. He was desperately and clandestinely unwilling to hear it. Some dim and far-off instinct *even then* told him that it would be necessary for him to go on believing this bad race to be *wholly* bad, *wholly* sinful; and that it was in order that he might so believe it, that the Chinese Iron had been ordained to enter into his soul.

But, with a certain reluctance, he ventured upon yet another question. He said:

"And you, sir—what is your motive for setting me free?—Mercy?—Is your only motive a motive of mercy? You want poor Englishman goee free?—Or you havee some other reason?"

Ni-ching-tang smiled at this simplicity of the little foreign devil, when the meaning of the question entered his head. He said:

"Poh! you no troublee head for that. Me havee other reasons. But that nothing for you."

Good again! he owed nothing to them. This man was liberating him for his own private ends.

Ni-ching-tang pointed along a road, and the mule moved. The Chinaman, whose presence in the Imperial precincts was nearly due, stood a little while and looked after the drooping figure on the mule's back. Then he re-entered the city to arrange for the burial of his son.

"Am got you anything to question me?"

John occupied two hours in accomplishing the four miles to Tung-chow, and, during this time, thrice fainted from sheer powerlessness.

But on the banks of the Peiho, Li-kien was duly waiting,

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and the *Taku* was in perfect readiness to receive her strange white master. By the time the alarm had spread through the Imperial precincts that, by the carelessness of his gaoler, the white prisoner had escaped, John Hardy was in the middle of Peiho, already some miles below Tung-chow.

In a wondrously short time, as the boat glided down the river he began to lift his head, to observe, to reason, to purpose. How large was the world to him! His wan eye turned whitely upward, and dwelt upon the sky; one great sob thronged in his bosom for exit from his choking throat; his face worked.

The boat was a bluff craft with an erection aft, making her there a kind of house-boat, and with stones laid round a slab of iron, for cooking, for'ard. The junk sail could quite easily be hoisted and adjusted by a single man, and gave to the boat, with a fair wind and stream, a speed of some seven knots. In a land where carts are driven over land by means of wind and sail, as in China, the navigation of the seas and rivers is in a condition far from elementary. John found his craft pliant and ready, and the bulge of the upward-tapering big sail was fine to his eyes. An exhilaration of mood, ecstatic, high, grew upon him. The day was broad and clear, and busy with breezes. On either hand of him spread endless flat-lands, already sprouting with the tender green of barley, rice, and millet. The river was all but deserted.

There was an aspect, not of earth, but of Paradise, in the bright and balmy world. Henceforth—and he knew it—he would have little to do with joy and soft emotion, and the throe of genial feeling; for the gentle heart within him was turned to stone, or something resembling stone. But for the present he was too weak in body and mind to resist the charm of the wide and placid landscape, and the feeling of freedom which it brought. His heart was still not quite a dead thing.

Yet, let us record two facts. Firstly, that John Hardy, from boyhood, had been of an intensely religious nature; that he had always had a somewhat crabbed habit of reading methodically one chapter each morning from the Bible; and that this affectionate soul had overflowed in affection for his Maker also. And secondly, let us state, that on this morning of his deliverance he several times resisted and repelled the impulse which rose in him to give thanks to God. He refused. So much had Yen How changed him. The boy had hardened into something more (or something less) than a man.

Midway between Tungchow and Tientsin, he left the rudder-oar and searched the boat. Li-kien, apparently, had forgotten nothing; there was food and drink in plenty, a pot, a compass of Western make, and a curious instrument, which he assumed to be a contrivance for taking the sun's altitude, but which he could not at once understand.

He made a fire, for which the materials were at hand, put on some rice to boil, and resumed his place at the oar.

Now and again a painted junk passed him, toiling up the river; but he was not even at the pains to hide himself, as Ni-ching-tang had warned him, so sure was he of safety.

At sun-down he glided between the central space, then open, of the bridge of boats across the Peiho at Tientsin. At eleven o'clock, under a calm and radiant night, he had Taku on his starboard beam; and soon he was in the open sea of the Gulf of Pechili.

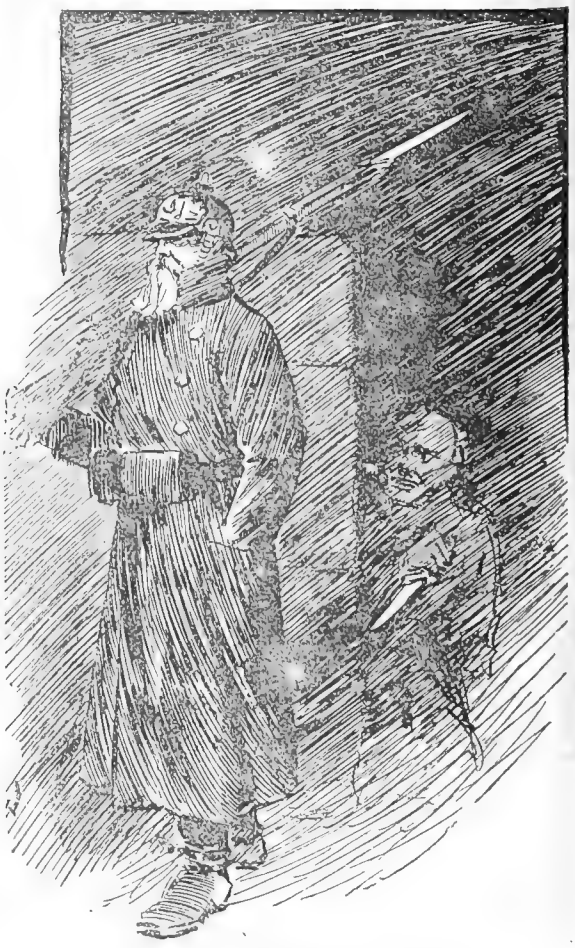
Feeling drowsy, about fifteen miles from land, he shipped his oar, lowered his sail, and went to sleep.

The point of his destination was Kiao-chau, once German, then very much English.

Here, seven weeks before, one dark midnight, a hundred and eighty English sailors had beached the battered second-class cruiser *Iphigenia*, and landed.

The subsequent adventures of these men, when properly written, would fill volumes. At present we can merely glance at them.

At the moment of landing, the Englishmen were no longer wholly in the dark as to the real state of things in China. The absence of all white men both at Chemulpo and Seoul, of which they knew, if not very suggestive in itself, was *very* suggestive when no explanation could be



Killing the unsuspecting sentries.

found of the flagless ships which had chased them, except the one that these ships were Japanese.

The possibility, therefore, that they would be massacred on Chinese territory occurred to them; and their object in coming to Kiao-chau, which was not very remote from the sinking ship, was to throw themselves upon the protection of the Germans, who, as they supposed, occupied the fort of Kiao-chau.

Previous to this, the Germans had very strongly fortified the harbour and its approaches. Its waters were thick with submarine mines, and two strong forts at each of the claws of land which formed the entrance, together with one on the low-lying island of Kinshan in the basin of the harbour, made the position one of considerable strength.

The harbour is about six miles long, and lies N. by W., and S. by E. Around it, in general, is high ground, save at the north-eastern entrance, when an area of sloping meadow-land, rises gradually to the higher levels of the inner *entourage* of the basin. And it was here that the *Iphigenia*, then on the point of sinking, was beached.

Fifty yards away, on the brow of a slope stood the N. E. fort. Though the night was dark, and rain fell heavily, its outlines could be made out.

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The blue-jackets held a sort of informal synod on the sands. There was among them only one staff officer, a lieutenant called Edwards, who, however, was wounded in the breast, and in a kind of daze. Happily, all the special hands were in evidence, except the surgeon, these including the chief engineer, engineer, and assistant engineer, the gunner, the boatswain, the carpenter, with the stokers, and all engine-room hands. Beside these there were about a hundred and fifty blue-jackets.

It was decided to make straight for the N.E. fort, and though no one present could talk German, a volunteer committee of ten, men headed by the chief engineer, a Mr. Murray, set off toward the rising ground.

But these were careless watchman, these Germans! Where was the sentry, and the challenge, and the soldier's stalk, and the rattle of the butt-end? Nowhere was there a light to be seen through all the dripping and desolate night.

The ten men reached the fort to find it as solitary as a desert. They called, and the hills echoed their voice, and through the open portal the night-bird fled and screamed. They passed within the gateway between the two outer bastions, and into the courtyard, and thence onward through every open door. They saw one dead Chinaman sitting in the embrasure of a window, grinning in old decay. But otherwise there was no sign of any struggle. At all events, there were no Germans there. Only the guns remained, and some ammunition and some stores, but not a single small arm.

What to do now? It only remained to visit the S.W. fort, and the fort on the island of Kinshan. And these they found in the same condition.

The Chinese had gained possession of them by killing the unsuspecting sentries in the middle of the night, and seizing, almost bloodlessly, the rest of the garrison, so to speak, as they slept in their beds. The captive soldiers were distributed over China for the celebration of Yen How's Sabbath of Blood; and the forts had then, for the time being, been deserted.

There remained now no further doubt in the minds of the British bluejackets as to their own fate. But they were resolved to sell their lives dearly.

The *Iphigenia* had still a steam pinnace uninjured, and in this they took turns in flying backwards and forwards between the ship and the island all the night, landing everything, in the way of stores, small arms, and ammunition, which might prove useful to them.

The gunner, Shillitoe, counselled the occupation of all the three forts; but Murray and the rest, fearing the result of a division of the little army gave their voice for a concentration of forces upon the island-fort, on account not only of its disconnection with the mainland, but also of the fact that it appeared to be the most powerful.

This plan was somewhat unfortunate, because the island was uncultivated, and furnished no other food than a scanty supply of wild orris and cassava roots, though there were three springs of rather brackish water. Moreover, at about sun-rise, the movements of the pinnace were observed by some peasants on the mainland, and very shortly afterwards there was a considerable commotion to the east and north of the bay. Though the work of the pinnace was not yet half completed, it was seen that no further voyage must be attempted, nor had any effort, as yet been made to spike the guns of the other two forts. At about seven, these two opened fire simultaneously upon the island fort.

At this period China was awake, or at least had opened her early-morning eye-lids; she had tasted blood, and every Chinaman was feeling the thrill of that electrical cob-web spreading over the land, of which the brain of Yen How was the centre. The artillery combat which now commenced between the island-fort and the others was fought not more obstinately on one side than on the other.

But the two outer posts had not been constructed in the main for inward attack, while the inner one had been constructed for outward attack. By noon, the two outer fortresses were in ruins. But the poor *Iphigenia*, also, by which the castaways set much store, had been broken by the wanton Chinese almost into nothingness.

And now commenced a series of strenuous and adventurous days and nights for these one hundred and eighty men—or rather one hundred and seventy-nine, for on the next day Edwards died. They had hardly any food; it was necessary to get it, and to get it in the teeth of the armed Chinese, directed by Japanese. And they got it.

Each night had its own tale of brilliant sortie, or crafty *ruse*, or daring enterprise, or cautiously premeditated plan. One by one their numbers lessened—they became a hundred and seventy—a hundred and sixty. But those who remained went on furnishing materials for a new Odyssey; in two weeks they were the most exquisitely-trained body of men in the world; every day added to them a new supremacy of discipline and culture; eye, and hand, and brain were in it; they could twist through the grass like snakes; could climb like Alpini; could see in the dark; could shoot like machines; could plan in deliberative council like statesmen. In seven weeks they were a living monument of the adaptability to every possible condition of life of the nimble English race.

But this Odyssey lacked Odysseus. It was *Hamlet* without the hero.

To do anything of much greater importance than the procuring of their food, they needed a leader, and a very decent leader indeed was on the way to join them.

(*To be continued.*)

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H. Pearson, 58 Princess Street, Hurst, Ashton-under-Lyne. *Pearson's Magazine* (Vol. I.). 6s.

Sam Stork, 47 Eldon Street, Sunderland. "Wayfaring Men," by Edna Lyall. 4s. 6d.

A. D. Allan, 458 Gallowgate, Glasgow. Cassell's "Sunlight and Shade." 5s. 8d.

Mrs. F. Venning, 75 Lady Margaret Road, N.W. "The Christian," by Hall Caine. 4s. 6d.

W. L. Lemon, Uffculme, Devon. "Springhaven." 7s. 6d.

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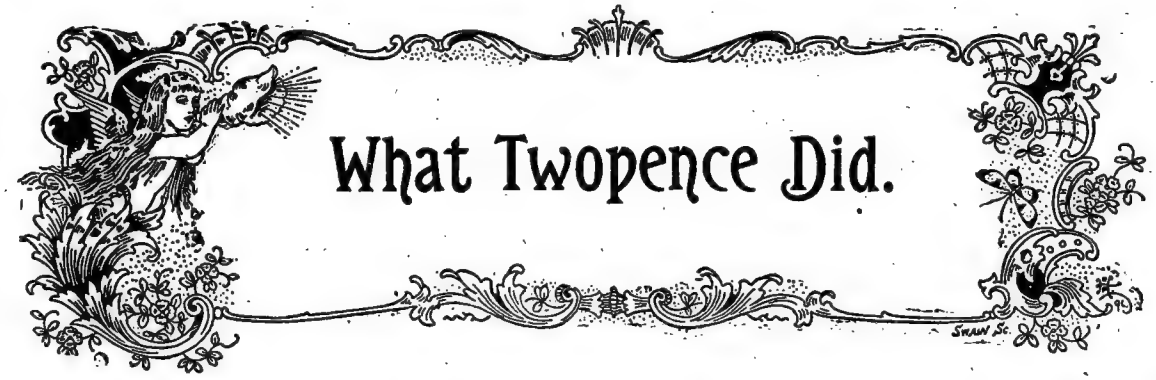

What Twopence Did.

When Mr. Worthington Quish opened his eyes that morning, after an unusually late session at his club, it was to see a noonday sunshine streaming in at his windows, and to hear the little gilded French clock on the cabinet opposite his bed striking twelve musical strokes.

As Mr. Quish had an engagement in town at precisely that hour, his toilet was of necessity hasty, which will account for the fact that he neglected to place in his pockets the money he had taken therefrom the night before.

The discovery that he was absolutely penniless was made five minutes later, when, having entered a 'bus he engaged to pay his fare.

The look of helplessness that overcame his handsome features as he searched in vain for the necessary twopence aroused the sympathy of the only other passenger, who sat opposite him, and by whose ripe beauty he had, on taking his seat, been not a little attracted.

She was more than an ordinarily handsome woman, of fair complexion, and with a figure remarkably well-rounded, the gracefully curved outline of which was enhanced by a close-fitting tailor-made gown of snuff colour.

There was a mischievous twinkle in her great blue eyes, and just the suggestion of a smile about the corners of her full, red-lipped mouth as she observed Mr. Quish's evident embarrassment.

Mr. Quish noted this and it put him in a better humour. There was something friendly in the expression, and he forgave the look of amusement for that reason.

"How annoying!" he said to himself. "I should have enjoyed the ride down with her to look at all the way."

The ride without paying his fare was, however, out of the question; and he reached for the strap in order to stop the 'bus.

As he did so his *vis-à-vis* spoke.

"Pardon me," she said, and her voice was as delicious as her pink-and-white face. "If you will permit it, I shall be glad to lend you your fare!"

Mr. Quish could scarcely believe he heard aright.

"Thank you very much," he replied. "It would be a great service to me. It seems I have forgotten my money, and I have an important appointment in town for which I am already late."

The lady opened the dainty little purse that she carried, and her neatly-gloved fingers extracted the requisite coppers which she passed over to him, and which he in turn passed to the conductor.

"You are very kind," Mr. Quish went on. "If I may be so bold as to ask you for your address, I shall have pleasure in returning the loan."

The lady smiled.

"It is scarcely worth speaking of," she answered.

"And yet," returned Mr. Quish, "twopence, as we have just seen, is of considerable more value sometimes than we have any idea of. I hope you will allow me to repay you. I should not have accepted it had I not looked upon it in the light of a loan merely."

It was now the feminine passenger that was embarrassed. To give her address to an utter stranger did not appear to her quite the correct thing, and yet she could scarcely expect a strange gentleman to accept from her even such a trifle as twopence as a gift.

After a second's mental debate with herself, she handed him a card, upon which was engraved:

Mrs. Edgar Lawrence Mandeville,
West Street,
Hyde Park,
W.

"And may I call, Mrs. Mandeville, and return the loan in person?" Mr. Quish asked emboldened by the knowledge that he had gained a point.

Mrs. Mandeville rose and motioned to the conductor. "If you care to," she replied, and the next moment she had alighted, and the 'bus with Mr. Worthington Quish, its only occupant, was rumbling on down the roadway.

* * * * *

It was a few minutes past five o'clock on the same afternoon that Mr. Quish, his exchequer replenished, mounted the steps of the house indicated on the card, which he had carefully preserved, and rang the bell.

Of the servant who answered the summons he inquired for Mrs. Mandeville, and was ushered into a reception room on the left of the hall. Already the dusk had begun to close in and the apartment, curtained as it was with heavy tapestries, was in something more than semi-gloom.

For ten minutes Mr. Quish sat still and waited. Then the unmistakable *frou-frou* of skirts came to his ears, and the next moment he was on his feet, exclaiming:

"Am I not prompt, my dear Mrs. Mandeville? Here I am, within six hours, prepared to refund every penny of the sum you were good enough to supply me with."

The lady made no reply.

"And I trust," he went on, thrusting his hand into his trousers pocket for the coin, "that my honesty plead

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for me when I ask that with this satisfaction of all your claims against me, our acquaintance, made under such novel circumstances in a 'bus, shall not end. Do you know, my dear Mrs Mandeville, I feel already that I have known you for years, and I am sure that when you know me better, you—"

At this point Mr. Quish came to a sudden halt.

There was a movement behind him, and turning, he distinguished in the gloom the figure of a man slowly rising from a sofa, where he had evidently been dozing.

The next moment the man had struck a match and lighted the gas, revealing to Mr. Quish's astonished gaze a woman several years older than his benefactress, and an elderly, nervous little fellow with grey beard, who was virtually fuming with rage.

"Who are you, sir?" he exclaimed, "and what is your business?"

Mr. Quish could not on the moment find words to reply. He realised that his position was a most awkward one, the fact having dawned suddenly upon him that his beautiful chance acquaintance had been guilty of making him the butt of a heartless practical joke.

"Your words to my wife, sir," went on the little bearded man, "require an explanation. By what right, sir, do you——"

"I beg your pardon," put in Quish, having by this time, in a measure, pulled himself together. "I beg your pardon most sincerely. I have made a mistake. I never saw your wife until this moment. I—I—I——"

The lady hastened to confirm the story.

"I am sure, my dear," she said, addressing her husband "that the gentleman will be able to explain everything. I have no more knowledge of him than you have. I have never seen him in my life before. I——"

The husband gave evidence of increasing irritation.

"Tut! Tut!" he interposed, "you cannot deceive me. I know better. Do you think I did not hear your conversation?"

"But I did not speak a word," pleaded the wife, who Quish now observed was quite pretty, and well calculated to fill an elderly husband's heart with jealous misgivings.

"Do not dispute with me," returned her lord; "I am not so old but that I can hear, and I am not so old but that I can see. Yes, madam, see. Did I not hear him call you Mrs. Mandeville? Did I not see you here standing before him while he talked to you about knowing him better? Ah! yes; it is quite clear to me now. I need no explanation; I will accept none. It is a flirtation you have been having, and you dared to receive the object of it under my roof."

The gentleman was shaking his fist so violently that his cuff had crept out and over the edge of his coat sleeve.

At this juncture Mrs. Mandeville fell to weeping, and Mr. Quish once more began an explanation.

"Not a word, sir," Mr. Mandeville interrupted. "I do not know that I can blame you, especially. You would not be human did you not accept encouragement given by a pretty woman. Ah! How different was my first wife! How different is my daughter! Modest and good, they would have repelled the advances of a stranger."

Mrs. Mandeville gave signs of hysterics, and Mr. Quish moved towards the door.

"If you will excuse me," he said. "I will withdraw. Since I cannot make you believe me, it is useless for me to attempt further to disabuse your mind."

As he spoke the door bell rang.

"Ah!" went on the husband and father, "that is she now. My little girl, I will let her in myself. I want her so badly at this moment. She is all I have left me," and there was an indication of tears in his voice as he spoke.

Mr. Quish had just turned to Mrs. Mandeville with a request for pardon on his lips when the sound of a familiar voice coming to his ears from the hall, caused him to stop and listen.

"Oh, papa dear," he heard, "how excited you are! Why, you're actually crying."

"Yes, my pet," came in broken tones from the old gentleman, "your stepmother has grossly deceived me, and you—you, my dear—are now my only comfort."

"I'm sure there must be some mistake—" Mr. Quish heard and waited for no more.

"There is! There is!" he fairly shouted, darting out to meet them, "and you can and will explain it all."

Miss Mandeville—the heroine of the 'bus ride—burst into laughter.

"How odd!" she exclaimed, "how very odd! Now I remember I gave you one of my mamma's cards instead of my own."

"You—you—" gasped the old gentleman, "do you mean to say you give cards to strange gentlemen whom you meet in 'buses and invite them to call on you? O, this is worse than ever, and I thought—I thought that you——"

"Now don't excite yourself, papa dear," Miss Mandeville urged, "I did nothing wrong, I am sure. The gentleman, you see, has merely come to return twopence which I was good enough to lend him this morning to pay his fare. He will, I am quite sure, having cancelled the debt, go, and never presume to call again. Am I not right?"

And Mr. Quish under the circumstances had no alternative but to agree that she was.

T. Sawdry.

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An Ex-Bank Clerk's Tale.

We were sitting round the fire in my diggings, when the conversation turned upon burglars.

"Talking of burglars," said Dick Chester, from the depths of his hammock chair, "do you remember a few years ago when the Metropolitan and Western Bank paid a much smaller dividend than usual, to the great surprise and dismay of the shareholders? You would recollect, Warham, I'm sure."

I nodded in reply. My father had been a shareholder in that respectable establishment, and some of his comments at the time had lived in my memory; in fact, I have utilised them myself on one or two occasions.

"Well," said Dick, "I was a clerk at the time, and was one of the few who knew the real reason of the diminished profits. It was kept very dark at the time; but as the bank has amalgamated with several others now, and I am no longer in its service, I don't mind spinning you the yarn if you care to hear it."

We conferred together and told him he might tell the tale if it was proper.

"When I was in the Metropolitan and Western Bank West-end Branch," he began, "there were two other men in the office who seemed to stand out above their fellow clerks—seemed to attract more attention as it were.

"One was Nathaniel Fipps, our chief clerk—about the finest specimen of a blithering idiot that ever stepped. How he ever got his responsible post beats me. Without brains, without common sense, and utterly without aspirates, he spent the day sitting in his box and gazing down the office with a smug look of self-satisfaction on his face that was a treat to see. He looked just as if he fancied that *he* was the controlling lever that manipulated the working of the bank.

"Of course his proper duties of arranging the work and the holidays were left to take care of themselves. If you asked him a question relating to the work, he generally made some remark that had no bearing at all on the subject, or else he tried to be facetious, which was more riling still. Oh! we *did* love him, I can tell you.

"The other man was a young chap of about two years my senior. Jim Stevens his name was, and he was a rattling good man. Very smart about his work and used his head over it; didn't do it like a machine as most bank clerks do. I didn't fancy him altogether, as he never seemed quite straight and he had a devil of a temper, but I was more friendly with him than any of the other men were.

"It was his temper that dished him finally. He had a furious row with Fipps one day about something in the work, and that silly old idiot, instead of ordering him back to his desk to cool down, tried to be funny. Stevens, being in a towering rage, construed the remark as an insult and smacked Fipps in the mouth. The inevitable followed; he was had up before the directors and promptly sacked, and we never saw him again. Smart men generally go off like that, only old fools like Fipps hang on for ever. We missed Jim after he'd gone, I can tell you.

"About three months after this we opened a current account in the name of Haigh and Co.—commission agents they styled themselves. They were regularly introduced, and commenced their account with a respectable amount. Only one member of the firm ever came into the bank, and he was a gentlemanly-looking chap with a black beard and blue spectacles. I had to speak to him one day and he seemed a very decent sort.

"Now you must know that a great many of our customers used to send us plate chests and deed boxes for safe custody, which we stowed away downstairs in the strong rooms. The position of these strong rooms was as follows: They lay underneath the bank and were guarded first by a huge steel door, a clutch bolt I think

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the name is, which was locked in two places with different keys. The manager kept one key and the chief clerk the other, so that both had to be present to open the door.

"Just inside this first door was another, which was more like a grating, a grille I believe they call it. These two doors led to the room where we kept all the boxes; to get at the money one had to open two more similar doors at the end of this first room. However the box room is the one we have to deal with.

"Soon after Haigh and Company opened their account they sent round to the manager saying that a large chest of plate was passing through their hands, and could they be allowed to deposit it at the bank for a night 'for safe custody.' Of course permission was granted, and soon after the chest arrived—a huge thing and fairly heavy.

"It was stowed away downstairs, and the next morning was fetched out again—to be forwarded to a country bank, so Haigh and Company said. Curiously enough, Haigh drew all the money off their current account, the same day, excepting five pounds.

"For six weeks work went on as usual, and then one day one of the customers came in to see his deed box, which was brought up for him, and he opened it in the manager's room.

"Then came a row. His box, which contained his securities, had been opened, and all the bearer bonds had been stolen—nearly two thousand pounds worth altogether.

"The old man was furious. The manager thought there must be some mistake—that he had never had those bonds in his box at all, but when we came to examine downstairs we soon discarded that theory. About twenty boxes had their seals broken and looked very much as if someone had been tampering with the locks.

"We communicated with those customers whose boxes had been tampered with, and they came in to examine their property. And the property, left for 'safe custody,' had been despoiled to the extent of nearly £30,000 in bearer bonds and diamonds a lady customer had sent in.

"The bank had to make good the loss in order to keep the matter quiet; it would never have done to let it be known our strong rooms were accessible to burglars; why, we shouldn't have had an account left.

"How the robbery was effected no one could make out. No one ever visited the strong rooms by himself—the grille was always locked all day, and if any boxes were wanted the chief clerk went down with a messenger to fetch them up. At night the manager took one key of the door to his house over the bank and the chief clerk took the other home with him. In addition to this a messenger slept in the office just in front of the door leading down to the strong rooms.

"The stolen bonds were found to have been all sold, and though they had passed through several hands, were traced back to a 'young man.' As there were several young men in London at the time the description was rather vague. It generally is a young man who does these sort of things, older men don't seem to care about running the risk. This particular gentleman, however, was never traced. He was absolutely unknown, and the mystery of the robbery seemed as if it would never be solved.

"About eighteen months after, I received a letter from West Australia. I recognised the writing as Jim Stevens' at once. Wondering what he was writing about, and hoping it wasn't for a loan, I opened it, and read a follows:

"Dear Dick,—No doubt by this time various discoveries have been made in your office, and as very likely suspicion may be resting on some of you, I think I had better set your minds at rest by explaining matters.

"Do you remember an account of Haigh & Co. and a certain plate-chest sent by them to you for safe custody? Well, that chest, when you received it, contained nothing more valuable than myself and some peculiar tools admirably adapted for lock picking. You see I was a partner in the firm of Haigh & Co. I made such good use of my night in the box room, owing to my knowledge of the customers and their investments, that the chest was of far more value when it was fetched away from the bank. We have, my two pals and myself, cleared about £9,000 apiece, and are here in Coolgardie enjoying it. Don't let anyone trouble to catch us. I would defy the smartest 'tec in the world to pot us now. Love to all in the office, and kick old Fipps for me.—Yours fraternally, "(Signed) Jim Stevens.

"Directly I read this letter I tumbled to the whole thing. Jim had remained concealed in his box until the strong rooms had been locked up for the night, and then he had come out with a good fourteen hours before him in which to do his deeds of darkness. His knowledge of the customers and their investments had enabled him to pick out the best boxes.

"It was a fine stroke of judgment that made him choose the latter part of August for his venture, as very few people are in town then, and not likely to come for their boxes. So he could reasonably expect a fair start before anything was found out.

"Well, I handed Jim's letter to our manager, and his face when he read it was a picture, though his rage was nothing compared to old Fipps'. That message *re* the kicking nearly made him mad. I was ordered to say nothing about the matter, but though everything was kept very quiet I managed to get hold of one or two facts. Of course they tried to trace the individual who sent the letter from Perth, W.A., and did actually succeed in finding that out by the merest chance.

"One of our detectives was spending the evening at a friend's house in Perth and he met a manager from a bank there.

"This manager, during the evening, told them a yarn about a letter he had received some time back, asking him to post an inclosed letter as soon as he conveniently could, as the writer had a bet about the time it took to get out to West Australia and back. Like a good sportsman, he posted the inclosure and thought no more of it. Our detective, never thinking about its being anything to do with his mission, asked the manager where the inclosed letter was addressed to. It made him sit up though when he heard it was sent to a man called Chester in the Metropolitan and Western Bank.

"Well that fairly upset all their calculations. It was pretty evident that Jim had sent this letter out to be posted in Australia as a blind, while he and his pals cleared out to some other part of the world. Of course he never thought that the business of the letter would come to light, so doubtless he was chuckling to himself over the thought of the detectives searching all over Coolgardie for him.

"To cut a long story short, old Jim has never been heard of from that day to this. Personally, I expect he's living like a duke somewhere in South America. And, scoundrel though he is, I should be sorry if he were to be caught, for though he deserves a long spell in the jug, yet I could forgive him everything for the clout on the head he once gave that old Fipps."

Howard Warham.

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SUMMARY.

Amaury Montruel, a knight, and Mahmoud-el-Reis, a Saracen, meet on the road to Paris. The former's mission is to kill the Queen of France; the latter's to kill the King. At the same time two children, Eric and Eve, are on their way to Paris to aid the Queen, and overhear the conversation of these two horsemen. Shortly afterwards a knight and his page give the children a lift on the road, and, on arriving at Paris, place them under the care of the Freemasons. Maître Samson, Montruel's secretary, tries to induce Tristan de Pamiers, king of the law students, to raise a rebellion in favour of Agnes de Méranie against Philip's consort, Queen Ingeburge. Albret, the King's page, takes Eve, *alias* Little Adam, to the King, who gives her permission to visit Ingeburge in her captivity in the Abbey St. Martin. Meanwhile Agnes de Méranie pays a visit to Notre Dame with Amaury Montruel, and stills the ominous cries of the people by distributing among them her paste jewels. In the cathedral she meets Mahmoud-el-Reis, who is carving a figure of the Virgin, and tries to win his regard by presenting him with pearls, which he crushes under his feet when she has gone. Returning from the visit to the cathedral, the members of the Royal party are intercepted by the Free-Lances, but are finally allowed to go on their way. Thinking this wild crew may be of future use to her, Agnes de Méranie determines to enlist the sympathies of their leader, Antoine Cadocu. To accomplish her object she visits him the same evening, accompanied by Montruel, in the low tavern in which he and his followers hold their nightly revels. She is very rudely treated, and returns with Montruel without having attained her object of enlisting the sympathies of Cadocu. Montruel's secretary, Samson, hints to the King that Agnes has been seen out late at night, and, although he confirms his suspicions, he does not allow Agnes to suspect his knowledge.

CHAPTER XI.

The Opening of the Council.

Every bell in Paris, whether from church tower or convent turret, was ringing its loudest, merriest peal, and the varied tones, from the low, clear note of the Angelus to the harsh clang of the tocsin, rent the morning air with deafening noise. At a very early hour the principal streets were thronged by eager, chattering crowds of small citizens and artisans, while the more important merchants solemnly occupied their own thresholds. Every street corner was marked by expectant groups, every window was filled by eager faces of women and children, and as the gutter urchin of that time was but little behind his modern representative in cheek and ubiquity, every available projection was adorned by festoons of arms and legs, twined ingeniously round wherever their owners could insinuate them.

It was one of those days when the heart of Paris is stirred as that of one man, whether for joy or sorrow, for a *fête* or for the news of a battle, for a marriage or for a funeral, for a display of fireworks or for a revolution, and the cause of all this interest was the opening of the famous council under the presidency of Gratien Florent, Bishop of Orvietto and Papal Legate, to inquire into the second marriage of King Philip Augustus, whom the Pope had summoned to appear in person before the Tribunal.

The bare fact of their powerful and victorious monarch being called to account in their midst would have been enough to rouse the people of Paris; but the point now at issue had a deep personal significance for every man and woman in the city, inasmuch as the decision of the Council meant the continuance or the removal of that merciless interdict which was striking terror to the heart of every subject of the French Crown.

From time to time a nobleman, dressed in the brave attire of the day, and followed by his gay and saucy page, passed by the waiting thousands, and a goodly array of priests, abbots, bishops and high dignitaries of the church made their way in solemn state to the chapel of the New Palace in the heart of the city, where High Mass was to be celebrated with stately pomp and gorgeous ritual.

The ceremony lasted three hours, during which time the bells pealed forth unweariedly, but as the last words of blessing fell from the lips of the Archbishop inside the chapel, every bell was hushed and, while the last vibrations still lingered in the air, the long procession of magnificently robed ecclesiastics, preceded by sacred banners, smoking censers, and burning tapers, descended the chapel steps singing the psalm *Quare fremuerunt gentes* to a grand old plain-song chant, and crossed the open court-yard to where another flight of steps led up to the ancient throne room in which the Council was to hold its sittings.

The vast crowd stood in breathless silence to watch the imposing spectacle. Every head was bared, every breast was marked by the Holy Sign, the more devout knelt in lowly adoration, and not even Ezekiel or Tréfouilloux dared to raise a mocking cry, so mighty was the hold that the Church's ceremonial had upon the minds of men in the Middle Ages.

As the last of the procession passed out of sight a new excitement arose, and wild sounds of jubilation rang through the air. Caps were thrown up, handkerchiefs and gaily coloured sashes were waved from the windows, and hearty cheers rang from every throat as the King appeared in the Rue St. Honoré on his way to answer the Papal summons.

His people loved Philip Augustus, for he was brave and strong, and a man of right royal mien. As to his matrimonial affairs, Paris had always judged a man leniently in such matters, and so they excused their monarch, even while their hatred increased daily and hourly of Agnes de Méranie, as the cause of all their troubles.

The King was a goodly sight on this memorable morning. He always looked his best on horseback, and now he was clad in full battle array, with the crown encircling his helmet, as if to remind his judges of his royal rank. He rode with raised visor, surrounded by all the great vassals of the crown, with their glittering suites, and protected by his imposing bodyguard.

"With all those fine lances," said one to another in the crowd between the shouts of "*Vive le Roi*," "with all those men, the King could easily have made the council come to him at the Louvre, instead of his going to them in the city."

Everyone felt sure that the King would never yield if the decision went against his marriage with Agnes, and in spite

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of all that his obstinacy would entail upon themselves, his loyal subjects could not suppress a certain thrill of pride as they thought of the iron will and resolute independence of their ruler, for patriotism had only been stifled by self-interest among the intriguing clique of the *haute noblesse*.

When the King disappeared within the palace, one of his attendant nobles turned aside his horse and began to force his way through the crowd in the direction of Nôtre-Dame. Though he rode with closed visor everyone knew it was Amaury Montruel, Lord of Anet and Friend of the King, and all who could, got out of his way as fast as possible, for they knew that he had no scruple in riding down any who stood in his path. All did not escape free from injury, however, many a one cringed and fell under the sharp blows he dealt to right and left on the hapless wretches who chanced to be within his reach. Montruel was in a savage mood, and was glad to vent his rage on those who were too weak to do more than revile him. He rode on recklessly till he got clear of the crowd and turned into the quiet side streets leading to the cathedral.

Here all was silent and deserted, only at the corner of the Rue de la Calandre three men stood, cup in hand, at the door of one of the taverns. These men were Maitre Samson, Maitre Honoré the Freemason, and Tristan de Pamiers, King of the Basoche. As he passed these men Amaury Montruel stooped down a little and called out: "To-night!" with a significant glance at Samson, but he never drew rein.

"My lord Amaury seems in so great a hurry that he has forgotten his manners," said Tristan in his calm, cynical tones. "He might at least have stopped and greeted me as becomes a gentleman."

"You heard him, comrades," asked Samson, not vouchsafing to notice the last remark, "he said 'to-night.' Now, are we ready?"

"I have undertaken," said Tristan, "to lead your rabble, and to supply them with trappings that will give them the appearance of students. I have the trappings, and when you bring me the rabble we can soon rig them out."

"I have promised," said Maitre Honoré, "to provide three or four hundred loafers, masons' labourers they call themselves, with good lungs to shout and good fists to fight. It is the very least one can do for so gracious a Queen who scatters sweet smiles wherever her fair presence shows itself. It's no use to think of taking any of the regular masons, for men who really work never meddle in a riot."

"Then all promises well," chuckled Samson, rubbing his lean, bony hands, "Maitre Honoré brings the men, and Tristan the costumes. You provide the viands and I will add the sauce in the shape of a horde of cut-throats and thieves, who'll shout louder than all the rest if they think there's a drink to be got by it."

The long procession of magnificently-robed ecclesiastics.

Montruel pursued his headlong course through the empty alleys, and across the deserted inclosure, which presented a striking contrast to the lively scene he had just quitted, and indeed to its own usual appearance. Only two or three men were to be seen working on the hugh edifice, all the loiterers were swelling the crowd in the city and, having tied up his horse, he entered the building unperceived and went straight to where the wonderful image was being fashioned.

Several days had passed since that eventful evening when Madame Agnes had braved the horrors of Cadocu's den, and in the short interval Montruel seemed to have aged ten years. His face was drawn, furrowed by deep lines, and was pale as death, while out of their dark-rimmed sockets his eyes shone with feverish brilliancy, and glanced hither and thither with uncontrollable restlessness. Each sleepless night and every hour of anguish had left its mark upon the man's face.

Madame Agnes had been obdurate, and had banished him from her presence till he should have struck the decisive blow and freed her from her rival.

When he entered the shed the two negroes were sitting crossed-legged, one on either side of the statue which, though not yet polished, had evidently received its last touch from the master's chisel.

"Where is Jean Cador?" he asked, looking round in search of the Syrian; but neither of the slaves attempted to answer him.

"Oh, of course, they don't know him by that name!" he said to himself.

"Where is Mahmoud-el-Reis?" he repeated.

The bright, glassy eyes flashed a look of recognition, but still no answer was forthcoming. Amaury walked to the middle of the room and for the first time took notice of the finished statue.

"What?" he murmured incredulously. "Can he have done that in a week? Impossible!"

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The idea of demoniacal assistance immediately presented itself to his mind, but a second surprise of even more significance was awaiting him. He looked at the statue intently as if he could not believe his own eyes, then exclaimed:

"It is! It is the Queen herself! Where *can* he have seen her? Or is it only a chance resemblance?"

He stepped back and looked at it from all points of view, then walked round it and examined every detail closely, while the two slaves remained as dusky foils to its dazzling purity.

"Yes, yes," he muttered, "it is Ingeburge and no other! I could not be deceived, but *how* has he done it?"

Turning quickly to the slaves, he asked imperiously:

"Has any woman been here to visit your master?"

Still the same impassive silence. Amaury, whose every

The two defenceless creatures prostrated themselves before him.

nerve was strained almost beyond endurance, could ill brook this sullen defiance. He laid his hand threateningly on his sword, and the two defenceless creatures prostrated themselves before him in an agony of fear. Seeing that his anger was by no means appeased, they slowly opened their mouths and thus pleaded their own cause most effectually. He saw that their tongues had been torn out, and so could tell no tales. In justice to Mahmoud-el-Reis, it must be said that he had borne no part in this brutality, for the slaves had been sold to him in this condition.

Montruel shrugged his shoulders saying:

"Diable! So that's the way he keeps his secrets, is it? I shall never know the truth, and I don't feel inclined to trust that infidel too blindly," said Montruel aloud.

A slight noise at the other end of the room caused him to turn round, and he saw Mahmoud standing in his customary attitude, with his arms folded across his breast before the curtain which shut off part of the shed. The Syrian had doffed his costly Oriental dress, and was wearing the simple clothes of a French mason.

"He whom you call 'infidel,' has never yet broken faith with any man. It were well if the same could be said of you, Amaury Montruel!"

The words fell unheeded on the ears for which they were meant, and the Frenchman seized his arm convulsively, saying:

"Is that a portrait? Tell me quickly!"

The Moslem bowed his head in acquiescence.

"Of whom? I must know!"

Mahmoud pointed to the half effaced sketch on the woodwork, but Montruel shook his head impatiently.

"Yes, yes, I know that! But it's very strange——"

The Syrian was watching him closely, and now asked:

"Do you know a woman who is very like that?"

As he got no answer he continued:

"It is not the one you brought here the other day, though you called her the Queen also?"

"No, I know that," was the curt reply.

"Then do you Christians sometimes love two women as well as we?"

Montruel's lips curled and showed his teeth unpleasantly:

"I don't love *that* woman, I hate her!"

Mahmoud drew near to the beautiful statue as if he would protect it from any violence, and as his eyes rested with loving, tender care upon it, he murmured:

"Dilah, my beloved!"

The train of thought always awakened by this name made him almost forget the presence of Montruel, but as an impatient cough brought him back to the disagreeable present he whispered to his handiwork:

"Every soul has its twin. The woman who he says is so like Dilah, must be her twin soul, and whoever she may be, I shall love her!"

Mahmoud-el-Reis resumed his grave, somewhat haughty manner, and peremptorily dismissed the slaves. Then he turned again to his visitor and requested him to be seated.

Amaury's restlessness hardly permitted him to keep in the same position for two seconds together, and he visibly chafed under the slow, deliberate movements of the Syrian.

"It is time that we settled this business," he began.

Mahmoud bowed his head:

"The Will of Allah be done! You must first hear what I have to say to you, Amaury Montruel, for I know you do not trust the 'infidel' yet."

CHAPTER XII.

The Moslem Speaks.

"Whichever of us," began Mahmoud-el-Reis in his solemn, impressive manner, "hesitates to sacrifice his own life, if needful, in the accomplishment of his master's orders, commits a sin; but equally he who risks his life uselessly, even while obeying his master's orders, commits a crime which can only be expiated by the seventh penance."

"You don't seem to have understood me," interrupted Montruel. "We have no time to lose in talking, it must be done to-day, this very day!"

"Yes, I understand *you*, but you must now try and understand *me*. In my country we speak no useless words. The King wears steel armour, and is guarded by valiant and faithful guards. I will not attack him either while wearing that armour or when guarded by his troops."

Montruel had taken off his helmet and was sitting with his head between his hands. When the Syrian paused he murmured, almost mechanically:

"The King knows all! The King knows too much! It is no use to think of going back now!"

Mahmoud had moved to the window, and was gazing down on the arm of the Seine which wound round the cathedral, its banks fringed by the quaint, picturesque buildings with their painted roofs, gables and turrets; but ever and anon his eyes wandered back to the beautiful statue. He hardly heard Amaury's words, for his mind was full of his approaching return to Dilah and the land of his birth. Part of his

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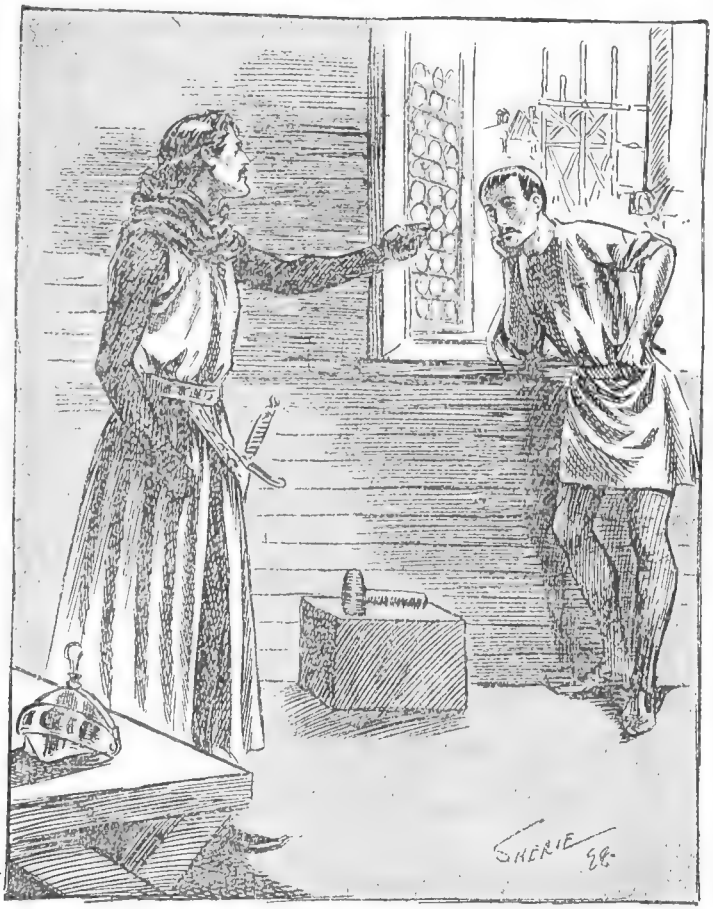
task was completed, and if this man abided by his promise, the rest could soon be accomplished. At present he was the only channel open by which the King could be reached with safety. Suddenly he began again in a seemingly irrelevant strain:

"Salim, too, was guarded by men and armour, and he was as far above your King as the Sun is greater than the stars—Salim, the friend of God, the Commander of the Faithful. He had five hundred black eunuchs, armed with scimitars of the most finely tempered steel, who never spared any who dared to look upon their master. To see him was to die—his name alone made men tremble from Bagdad to the far East.

"Mohammed, the Holy and Strong, the Vicegerent of Heaven upon earth, told me to go to Bagdad and kill Salim the Commander of the Faithful. Twelve *Fédavi* had already gone forth on this errand, but none had returned, and their bones were rotting in the sewers of Bagdad. I knew this: I was not yet sixteen: but I started with gold in my belt, and the crystal poniard hidden for the first time in my vest. In the streets of Bagdad there were twelve blocks of marble which they told me marked the spots where those who had tried to assassinate the Caliph had perished, and I went to the front of the palace and plunged my poniard in the ground, saying: 'Here shall perish either Salim or myself!'"

Montruel, who had been listening with unconcealed impatience now got up exclaiming:

"What does all this matter to me? You promised to kill the Queen!"



"What does all this matter to me? You promised to kill the Queen!"

"And you promised to deliver the King into my hands," was the grave reply.

"Well, have I refused?"

Mahmoud leant against the window frame, looking critically upon the man before him.

"Then if you do not refuse, listen again, so that you may know what I require of you. In the place where I struck my poniard there was nothing but a group of palm trees, so I dressed up as a beggar, dragged a stone to the spot for my seat, and waited for the coming of the Commander of the Faithful. For more than a year I sat there day by day, without success, till at last the Caliph appeared, surrounded by his black guards. I sprang forward, but before I could reach him, a scimitar pierced my breast and I remembered no more. Another year had passed before I could drag myself from my couch of suffering to visit the fated spot. I found that the palm trees had been uprooted and a large hole dug, which they told me was for the foundations of a new Mosque that Salim was building as a thank-offering for his deliverance.

"I went down on my hands and knees and crawled about searching for the place I had marked with my poniard, and at last by the mercy of Allah, I found it untouched in the midst of the space left for the main entrance. All round me men were working at delicate scroll work for the decoration of the Mosque, and carving of every description was being carried out by artists of great cunning.

"The prophet inspired me to learn their craft, and for four long years I worked amongst them, and lived in the growing temple till I knew every stone of it. I had mastered all the branches of the art, and my teachers mentioned my skill to the Caliph, who took me into his employ under the following circumstances:

"Above the spot I had chosen, the stately arch had risen to its appointed height, and only the carved keystone was wanted to complete it, but twenty times that stone had been cut and carved only to fly to pieces through the agency of some evil spirit, as men said, before it could be raised to its place."

"*Parbleu!*" exclaimed Montruel in exasperation at the long-winded deliberation of the man he dared not offend, "do you think I can stay here all day while you meander on in these waking dreams, Maitre Jean Cador?"

"I waited seven years to kill the Caliph," replied the Moslem, unmoved, "and I have only been seven days in Paris. If you cannot serve me as I wish to be served, let us part. I can bide my time."

"Go on," sighed his hearer hopelessly, gnawing his nails in nervous irritation.

"I was the cause of those twenty stones flying to pieces, for I had learnt in Kathay the secret of making that mysterious powder which explodes when brought into contact with fire and bursts every barrier that confines it. I spent my nights in manufacturing this powder with sulphur and saltpetre, then a few hours before the stone was to be placed I bored a hole, inserted some of the powder and applied a fuse.

"The Caliph said to me: 'Mahmoud-el-Reis, you are skilful and love your work, will you undertake to cut and carve me a stone that can be fixed in its place without accident? If you succeed I will give you 20,000 sequins: if you fail, you shall be flogged to death on the spot.'

"'I undertake to cut and carve the stone,' I replied, 'if

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the King of Kings, the sight of whose splendour dazzles like the rays of six suns, will accord one favour to his poor slave.'

"'There is but one God and Mahomet is His Prophet! The favour that I ask is that the Kings of Kings will shed the light of his presence on the scene of my labours and occupy the place I shall assign to him when the stone is fixed.'

"I took a year to cut and carve the stone, which was nearly half the size of this shed, and when it was finished, I passed the night beside it with a drawn scimitar in my hand. On the following day Salim greeted me with gracious approval, and asked where he should stand in order to fulfil his promise. I indicated to him the exact spot which my poniard had pierced seven years before, and he took up his position there under a silken canopy upheld by sixteen slaves.

"At a sign from me the pulleys began to work, and the gigantic stone was lifted from the ground and swung in mid air. I was on the top of the framework supporting the arch, with my dagger concealed in my breast. When the huge mass hung directly over the silken canopy, I drew my dagger, cut the ropes and shouted the dreaded name of Mohammed, Lord of the Mountain, while the great stone thundered to the ground, crushing all beneath it.

"I tell you all this, because I feel here in Paris as I did in Bagdad, too weak to cope with a monarch surrounded by his guards, and because I wish to know if you will bring Philip Augustus here, and place him in the doorway of Nôtre-Dame at the day and hour I shall indicate to you?"

"A brilliant idea, a splendid way out of the difficulty, comrade! I cannot promise to bring the King here at any hour you may assign, but I can give you notice of the time when I know he will have to pass through the door, and that comes to the same thing."

"Yes, that comes to the same thing."

"Well then, that is settled most satisfactorily," said Montruel briskly, "now for your share of the bargain. You don't know what I suffer, what tortures I endure till that deed is accomplished. I may not see her whom my soul adores while that woman lives. I am parted from my heart's desire, from the one for whom alone I live, and every moment away from her is an eternity of suffering. You who love, ought to sympathise with me, for I adore this woman as you adore Dilah——"

"Do not dare to let *that* name pass *your* lips, nor venture to sully it by comparison with the one you think you love."

Montruel felt he could have flown at the man's throat, but he controlled his fury, though he bit his lips till they bled in the attempt. Mahmoud was again standing in front of the statue, saying in a voice of deep self-reproach:

"It is my fault that they are able to profane thy name, for I betrayed it to them, and I have even dared to show them thine image, which the Prophet has forbidden to his followers. Pardon me, Dilah, my beloved; They shall never again profane thy name, and I call Allah to witness that they shall not have thine image!"

The last two sentences were spoken so low that they escaped Montruel's ear, and he was so used to the Moslem's murmured utterances of the names "Allah" and "Dilah" that he paid little attention.

The Syrian drew a curtain round the statue, and closed it with loving care.

"You've not told me yet how you propose to gain access to the Princess Ingeburge!" said Montruel.

At the name of Ingeburge a creaking sound was heard behind the partition which faced outside and overlooked the great doorway. Mahmoud listently intently, but without losing his presence of mind, but Montruel started violently and made for the window, saying nervously:

"Is it possible that anyone can have overheard us?"

"Look out, and satisfy yourself."

Montruel stretched half his body, with great difficulty, through the window and carefully looked about him. There was not a human being nearer than the occasional passers-by in the streets far beneath them, for the precincts of the cathedral were still deserted, and on the scaffolding

Lay as one dead at the feet of the veiled statue.

immediately below there lay only the many-shaped stones, some waiting to be carved and others ready to be fitted into their resting places.

"There's no one up here, so far as I can see," he said, drawing his head in and carefully closing the rickety shutters.

"And is it difficult to get into the Abbey where Queen Ingeburge is confined?" asked the Moslem meditatively.

"Almost impossible."

"Even for you, the King's favourite?"

"Even for me."

"They tell me there is a hospital attached to the Abbey?"

"So there is," replied Montruel, eagerly catching at the idea. Then his face clouded again as he added:

"But you are not ill."

"No, but I can fall ill."

"It's no use pretending—" began Montruel.

"I said nothing about pretending," replied Mahmoud drily; "I said *fall ill*. Now, listen carefully to me and don't miss a word that I speak. In another moment I shall be lying there, at your feet, in a state of unconsciousness, without speech, sight, or movement. You will fetch the first masons you can find and tell them to put me on a stretcher, then, I think," he added with a sardonic smile, "your powerful influence will be able to gain admittance to the hospital for a dying man?"

Montruel looked at him in speechless wonder, and before he could find words to reply, the Syrian had drawn a small phial from his vest and had placed it to his lips. In a moment his words were fulfilled, and after a slight convulsive movement he lay as one dead at the foot of the veiled statue.

(To be continued.)

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Your Esteemed Inquiry Duly to Hand.

I hope my readers have taken to heart the appeal made to them on behalf of the Fresh Air Fund. I remember last year *Short Stories* contributed quite a large sum to the F.A.F., and was responsible for the happiness of several thousand children. This year I hope my readers will respond in the same generous-hearted manner. If you have not any spare cash by you, grub around and dig up some old toys, mail carts, bicycles or anything of that sort which might be either utilised by the children, or turned into cash.

P. T. E.—At the present moment there are 875 commissioned officers in the Army who have risen from the ranks.

Adam writes: "Are reptiles unknown in any country?"———Newfoundland is quite without reptiles; no snake, frog, toad, or lizard has ever been seen there.

Dissatisfied. — Perhaps a certain garden in China would suit you. It embraces an area of 50,000 square miles; is all meadowland, and filled with lakes, ponds, and canals.

C. T.—No, "odd or even" cannot be regarded as a modern game in any sense. We read that on one occasion during the Roman festivals of Quinquatria, Augustus sent his daughter 250 denarii so that she could play at "odd or even" and thus while away the weary hours. Which also proves that feminine gamblers are not peculiar to this *fin de siècle*.

Caterer.—The Sultan of Turkey spends more for his table than any other human being of either modern or ancient times, namely, £1,000 daily.

Q. A. would be glad to know if the use of artificial limbs was known to our ancestors———Yes, indeed, as far back as B.C. 700, when they were made use of by the Egyptians. They were made by the priests, who were the physicians of that early time.

D. D.—The chloride, bromide, and iodide of nitrogen are the most powerful explosives known, but their instability is so marked that they are useless. A mere jar will send off the chloride of nitrogen with fearful violence.

L. L.—Barristers' wigs are made from horsehair, most of which is imported from China and South America. The discomfort of wearing these wigs during hot weather is not so great as you would imagine, for they are quite light. A junior's wig weighs but two and a quarter ounces, and the price has always been six guineas; the wig of the Lord Chief Justice, however, turns the scale at five ounces, and costs twelve guineas.

B. Haslan.—The annual cost of clothing the Life Guards is given as £7 9s. 3d. for each man. The infantry of the line are turned out at £2 17s. 2d.; and the Highlander, with his feathery cap and tartan kilt, costs £3 16s. 5d.

Abstainer.—Hot milk is a recognised drink in some of the German cafés. It is served in a cup with a saucer, and two pieces of sugar always accompany it.

Curious writes: "I have seen it stated that a single fox skin has fetched as much as £200. This must be a mistake."———It is not the Reynard of our nursery days that is meant, Curious; it is the black fox of Kamschatka. The skin of this animal, when dressed, becomes an attractive blue, and a single skin has been known to sell for the figure you mention. A pelisse worn by the Emperor Nicholas I., which was lined with the fur of the black fox, cost £2,000.

Tommy A.—The youngest Colonel in the British army is Colonel Wingate, R.A., who has not yet completed his thirty-seventh year.

Bee-keeper has hit upon what he considers a really good idea. He writes: "Why not train the honey bee to carry messages like the carrier pigeon? I have not worked the thing out thoroughly yet, but I am sure it can be done well."———Your idea is not new. Four or five years ago an English bee-keeper set to work to train bees for that purpose, but I have not heard that he was successful. His notion was to take the creature from the hive, stick to its little back a scrap of paper bearing a message in microscopic characters, and throw it into the air. Home it was to go, like the pigeon, but it would have this advantage over the bird, that it would probably not be seen in time of war, or if seen, would be very difficult to shoot.

B. T.—When the telephone wires are overland the rate of transmission is said to be about 16,000 miles a second; where the wires are through cables under the sea the speed is much less.

Glossy.—Yes, in spite of the unqualified condemnation of the mole by most of our farmers, it is a noteworthy fact that sheep thrive best in a pasture infested with these smooth-coated creatures. This is due to the better drainage of the land.

Pat.—During the past year nearly 60,000 acres have been reclaimed in Ireland from bog and marsh lands.

Carat.—The ruby in the centre of the Maltese Cross on the top of the British Crown is the stone given to the Black Prince by King Pedro of Castille after the battle of Najara. At the battle of Agincourt, King Henry V. of England wore it in his helmet.

Freedom wishes to know if negroes were ever sold as slaves in this country; and, if so, when the last sale occurred.———An extract from the *Stamford Mercury* of the 30th November, 1771, will answer both your questions. It runs: "At the sale of a gentleman's effects at Richmond, a negro boy was put up and sold for £32." That was probably the last sale of the kind in this country, for, in the following year, a judgment of the Court of King's Bench decided that slavery could not exist in England.

Milky.—The milk production of the chief European countries is estimated by a German statistician as follows, the figures representing millions of gallons: Germany, 2,843,600; France 2,023,400; Great Britain, 1,785,000; Austria, 1,661,400; Sweden, 441,550; Netherlands, 264,350; Denmark, 225,000; Belgium, 215,500; Switzerland, 211,800.

A. M.—A steeple is an odd place for a statue, but your friend is right in saying that a statue of one of our kings was placed upon the steeple of a London church. Mr. Hucker, a local brewer, presented to the Church of St. George's, Bloomsbury, an effigy of King George II., and it was placed in position on the steeple. That was about 165 years ago. This building is regarded, as far as its exterior is concerned, as the ugliest of its kind in the metropolis; the plan is said to have been suggested by Pliny's description of the tomb of Mausolus.

A. R. C. finds it difficult to imagine a poor peer; he thinks that when a nobleman is overtaken by poverty, he should drop the the title and settle down as a commoner.———This might be considered a great injustice to his children in the event of fortune smiling upon the family again. But in olden times poverty disqualified a peer from holding his position. In the reign of Edward IV. a Duke of Bedford was degraded on this account. The reason is set forth in the preamble of the Act: "Because it (poverty) causeth great extortion' etc., to the great trouble of all such places where the estate (of the impoverished peer) happens to be." There was a comparatively easy way of getting rich in those days.

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UPS AND DOWNS OF THE BAROMETER.

Whatever the cause may be, there is no doubt that the average output of human nature varies with the weather. When the barometer is high the community is cheerful. Old chronic maladies let up a little on the sufferers, as an obliging stranger might stoop and loosen one's overtight shoestring. Even pickpockets and politicians think seriously of earning an honest living. People who carry rusty old grudges in their hearts for years on end, are apt to think on bright days whether it wouldn't be better to patch things up and get on more endurable terms with their enemies. The city banker feels moved to give a halfpenny more to his bootblack, and the habitually courteous Englishman may gild his politeness with the ghost of a smile.

On the other hand, when the barometer goes down, the spirits of the people go down with it. Melancholia, like a black fog, begins to spread about, making those who are usually sad feel that the earth is but a graveyard, and turning the quips and quidities of the joker into verbal idiocies that make his friends want to kick him downstairs. It is nearly always during the prevalence of low barometer that the man with murder in his heart makes up his mind to do the dastardly deed, and the poor unfortunates who are tired of life conclude to make an end of it. And as to the influence of the weather on disease (almost any disease), it is very distinct and decided. It is the cold rainstorms that develop one's latent rheumatism, and make him feel like setting the house on fire, or blowing somebody up with dynamite.

Now, if the weather in the neighbourhood of Bury St. Edmunds had always been fine and dry and warm, Mr. George Garwood would never have had an attack of influenza. Not that influenza is really caused by bad weather, but it is *brought out* by it, just as rheumatism is, and pneumonia, and bronchitis, and consumption, and a lot of other ills which seem to lie inside of us waiting for some power to stir them up. But in the early part of 1891 there was plenty of bad weather, and hence it came to pass that Mr. Garwood had an experience of which he writes as follows:

"In the early part of 1891 I had an attack of influenza. After this I was never properly strong. I felt very languid and weakly, my breathing being short. I had a poor appetite, and the food I took gave me no strength.

"My legs were swollen, and I could barely get about, often being confined to bed. As time went on I gradually wasted away to a shadow. I had no pain, but a dreadful sinking, all-gone feeling. Friends who saw me thought I should never recover. I had a dootor, but his medicine did not help me. For over three years I continued in this weak state, when a friend told me how he had benefited by Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup. I got a bottle of this medicine from Mr. Nice, grocer, Bury St. Edmunds, and after taking it felt stronger.

"I continued with it and gradually improved, and was able to get about. Since then, by taking an occasional dose, I keep in good health. You can make use of this statement as you like. (Signed) George Garwood, Horringer, near Bury St. Edmunds, May 13th, 1897."

Influenza has been epidemic often enough of late years in England to make its character familiar to a great number of people. It prevails nearly always in autumn, winter, or early spring, but never in summer. It is often followed by lingering bad health, which the sufferer is apt to attribute to influenza as *a radical cause*, as Mr. Garwood seems to have done. However, influenza *is itself caused* by a certain impurity in the blood, called by the medical writers a micro-organism, a term which means simply a ferment so minute as to be discernible only by the microscope.

As a matter of cold, plain fact, the actual cause of influenza, as of a majority of our best known diseases, is an impure state of the blood produced by fermented or partially digested food in the stomach and intestines, or, in other words, by indigestion, or dyspepsia continued for a considerable length of time. Dyspepsia and some of its frightful consequences, in Mr. Garwood's case, followed the attack of influenza, as he relates. But if he will cast his memory back, he will doubtless recall having been troubled with indigestion *before* the influenza, for Nature never reverses her processes. Mother Seigel's Syrup cured him by setting the digestive system in order, and driving the poison out of his blood. And if I were asked what is the best possible way of fortifying oneself against the mischievous effects of a low barometer, I should say, Keep your stomach strong and your blood clean by taking a dose of Mother Seigel's Syrup every time you don't feel quite right.